STRANGE TALES

FROM

HUMBLE LIFE.

SECOND SERIES.

BY

JOHN ASHWORTH.

SECOND CANADIAN EDITION.

TORONTO:

WESLEYAN BOOK ROOM, 80 KING STREET EAST.

1873.

PREFACE.

IN presenting this edition of STRANGE TALES to a Canadian public, it is not needful that anything should be said concerning the Author, the extensive sale of whose works has made his name a "household word" in thousands of homes in our Dominion.

It has been thought that a smaller volume of JOHN ASHWORTH'S "TALES" would better meet the wants of Sabbath-schools, as well as find its way into the hands of many who could not afford the more expensive editions of his works; and, to accomplish this, the present volume is issued.

It is perhaps only necessary to add that none of the "TALES" in this edition are included in the larger volume of *Strange Tales from Humble Life*, by the same Author.

With prayers for the blessing of the Great Head of the Church upon these simple records, we commit them to the press.

TORONTO, 1873.

Contents.

HARRY.

MINDS that love to gaze on creation's wonders, and behold with profound pleasure the sublime dissolving views of the heavens, the earth's countless tints of beauty, or the grand majestic sea, often feel by the contemplation an elevating influence to which they would otherwise be strangers; and this influence is, in degree, regulated by the condition of the heart and conscience. The song of birds, the scent of flowers, the voice of the stars, the glory and harmony of God's works, are the best seen and felt by those whose hearts God has made the most pure, and whose consciences are the most void of offence towards God and man; for it is through the moral vision the soul takes in the true and beautiful in things physical as well as spiritual.

The mind at peace, serene, and calm,
Tinges with glory all around.

But when conscience is ill at ease from any cause; when the still small voice will still be heard; when we feel an undefinable something dreadful tracking our steps, some painful reckoning that we know must be made, then the dappled heavens, the rainbow's hues, or the tints of the lily, if seen at all will give few joys, but rather intensify our feelings of sadness. A tradesman said, "When I had committed my first act of forgery, the song of my canary and the ringing merry laugh of my children, gave me the most intense pain of mind; their happiness jarred on my misery, and I could not bear the contrast." And when the woman was asked by a child to smell the sweet white rose she answered,—

"I cannot now smell the rose, child, or look at it with any pleasure, for it reminds me of my days of innocence; days I would give the world to possess again." A third, when asked to behold a beautiful landscape, replied,—

"Landscapes, or the beautiful in nature, have no charms for me. There is a policeman yonder, that I care more about than any landscape, for I suspect he is looking in this direction."

Forged bills, virtue lost, policeman feared, will take the charm from the warbling of birds, mirth of children, the perfume of roses, or the beauty of landscapes: for a guilty conscience is the grave of all true pleasure. Many have proved this true, and Harry is one of the number.

Harry was one of that numerous and highly respectable class generally called clerks or bookkeepers; thousands of whom are to be found all over the nation, but principally in our large manufacturing towns. Their beginnings are often very humble, their position and labours confidential and responsible, and great trust is reposed in them. Millions of money pass through their hands, and from their ranks spring many of our merchant princes. When Harry first mounted the long-legged stool, a new world opened out before him; he had

heard that the head of the firm was once a poor lad, and he saw that industry and integrity might again do what it had done before. For several years he patiently toiled on, receiving annually a small increase of salary, and was more and more trusted with work requiring the strictest honesty. His employers treated him with respect, and left several matters in his hands, which showed their increasing regard for his prudence. His Sundays found him in the church, and his spare evenings were spent in study and the reading of books calculated to strengthen his intellect and moral principles. He married a respectable young woman, made a fair start in life, and all seemed bright in prospect. But one thing was lacking, and for want of that one thing he was comparatively weak. He was not a decided Christian, and consequently less prepared for temptation, which in some form is the common lot of all. Harry became dishonest. I know that a man may be honest who makes no profession of religion. There are hundreds who would scorn to break the eighth

commandment, who would not care much about breaking all the other nine. To boast of our integrity, because we have not sinned against the whole decalogue, is not much to boast of. One man may be strong where his neighbour is weak, and weak where his neighbour is strong,—some stand at a point where others fall, and fall at a point where others stand. None are safe at every point but those who have hold of the offered hand that can uphold us all. "Thou shalt then walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble," for this hand sustains the universe, and blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust. There was a young man in the same office with Harry who had obtained his situation through the influence of friends. This young man was impatient and rather lax in his morals. One day the two being alone in the office, he standing with his back to the fire, and Harry busy at the desk, speaking in an undertone, he said,—

"Harry, lad, I have been thinking that this world is made up of horses and riders, and if we do not ride we shall be ridden;

and I am determined to be a rider. What prospect have you and I, with our noses to the grindstone day after day for our paltry salaries? We never need to think of a house in the country or a competency for old age. I am sick of it."

"But our employers have houses in the country, and a provision for declining years, and they began life poor as either of us, and keeping their noses to the grindstone, as you call it, has made them somebody, as it has done thousands besides them," replied Harry.

"But it has taken them a desperate long time; it is slow work, and I am determined to go rather faster. I made as much money in one hour last week as my quarter's wages will be! What think you of that, my lad?"

"How did you do it?" asked Harry.

"Go with me to-night, and you shall have your first lesson; and you will find that a fortune is much sooner made than some people think," was the answer.

Without any suspicion Harry went, and was conducted by his fellow-clerk to a well-furnished upper-room, where sat several

gentlemen; some smoking cigars, and all drinking spirits. Two were settling accounts that required a many bank notes, and both seemed much excited, the certainty of a favourite horse winning was the subject of conversation, and several bets were offered and taken. Harry saw at once where he was, and after drinking a couple of glasses of whiskey he went directly home, rather astonished to think he had been in such a place, but he had heard enough that night to make him look very anxiously at the sporting columns of the paper the following morning,—a part of the paper he had never thought worthy of his notice before. The head of the firm hearing from a private letter that the new clerk was a frequenter of the betting house at once discharged him. Harry saw how narrow his own escape had been, and for a time it acted as a warning. A few weeks after the discharged clerk met Harry at a railway station, and informed him he had made a considerable sum by his betting, and offered to furnish him with secret information when the chances were good, and

be his agent for any amount he wished to stake, promising to keep all in perfect confidence. Harry had five pounds, part of his quarter's salary, and in a moment of weakness he handed it to the persuasive blackleg; in a few days after twelve pounds was returned, his five having made seven pounds more at the York races.

From that time Harry paid daily attention to the sporting, or rather blackguard columns in the papers, caring far more for the bettings than the money article, foreign markets, or prices current, working his small capital through the secret but fatal medium, sometimes winning and sometimes loosing, and at last lost more than he was able to pay; the gamester lent him what was required on a six months' bill, deducting thirty per cent. interest.

From that day Harry became the companion of a troubled conscience; how to meet the bill when it fell due he could not tell, and he knew if he did not he should be exposed, and probably lose his situation and character, and to him character was every-

thing: that gone, his bread was gone. His wife perceived a change; he was often silent and thoughtful, and frequently troubled in his sleep, but in her innocence she attributed it to his close office hours, and urged him to take a little more exercise in the open air.

Harry's condition was no doubt one of trouble, and his experience was like that of hundreds, if not thousands, who have fallen from the same cause. Many I have known. Very lately a fine young man called upon me, requesting an interview. With anguish of spirit he informed me he had left his situation and home to escape from debt, consequent on betting, and he had a fear lest he might some day rob his master to get rid of his tormenting gambling creditors; that he had posted a letter to his father telling him of his flight and that he need not seek for him for he should never return.

"What do you want me to do for you, my young man?" I asked.

"Help me to get work in an office, warehouse, labouring, anything that will be bread."

"Will your father care for you having left your place and your home?" I asked.

"Oh yes, sir; my father is a good man, and always by precept and example taught me the right way. I never knew my father do wrong, and I was comfortable and happy before giving way to this cursed betting."

"Have you a mother, or brothers, or sisters, sir?"

"I have no mother, but several sisters some of them very young."

"Well, sir; you must at once write home, and tell your father you are here, and that I think I can get you work."

"Oh, I dare not write home," he replied.

"But you must, or I will not stir one step to help you. If your father be the man you say, your letter will almost kill him, for he will think you have done something terrible, and intend self-destruction."

He sat down, and, with trembling, wrote home; I sending it to the post. The following day I received a letter from the father addressed to the son, who, after having read

it, handed it to me. It was written in a tremulous hand, and read as follows:—

"My dear child, why have you run away? What have you done? Do tell me, and tell me all. Have you robbed your master? Are the police seeking you; or is it something worse still? I have known no sleep since I received your first letter; I took it up stairs and spread it before God, beseeching Him to have mercy on you, and guide you to John Ashworth, of Rochdale, who I did believe would take care of you until something could be done. He has so far answered my prayer; and now tell Mr. Ashworth to advise with you what is the best to do; write me at once, and the Lord God save you my child."

Inside the father's letter there was one from a young sister. She, childlike, wrote:

"Dear Brother, why do you not come home? Father cries and cannot eat, and we all cry because you do not come home. Will you come to-day? Do come and made us all happy; that is a good brother, and I will kiss you."

Had these two young men hearkened to one single sentence of the Bible,—"If sinners entice thee consent thou not," all this suffering would have been spared; or especially had they been converted to God, born again of the Spirit, and been new creatures

in Christ Jesus, then they would have sought divine guidance, and God would have directed their paths, for no godly man, or even honest man, would even think of betting. The betting man wants money without earning it, or without giving an equivalent for it: nothing but crime and misery can come from gambling; misery to the loser and a guilty conscience to the winner; both are accursed with

> "The avenging fiend that follows them behind
> With whips and stings."

Some it has hanged, some transported, and imprisoned more. Few gain in the long run, and those gains are never blessed. "Woe unto him that gaineth an evil gain," is the declaration of Him that can send the woe.

As the time for meeting the bill drew near, Harry's distress of mind increased. All hope that the man who first led him wrong would help him was gone, for he had been forced to leave the country to escape the consequence of his villainy, he joined the Southern army, and lost his life in the

American civil war. So Harry was left alone to meet the coming trouble. Had he told his wife, or made known his danger to a few friends, he might have been saved, but he feared to tell; and this fear, coupled with his folly, led him deeper and deeper into sin. Thoughts, now entered his mind that twelve months before would have made him shudder. Having to assist in stock-taking, he secreted a valuable article, and in the dark had it conveyed to a receiver of stolen goods; he paid his betting debt, but at what a fearful cost! The article not appearing in the stock-book, nearly eighteen months elasped before the theft was detected, and during those eighteen months it would be impossible for pen or tongue to describe the mental anguish and extreme suffering that Harry endured. When speaking to me of this fearful period he said:

"I believe there needs no hell to be more terrible than a guilty conscience. To know that you have committed a crime for which retribution may overtake you any moment; to feel that when you lie down at night you

may be dragged from your bed by a police-man before morning, or when you rise in the morning you may be in gaol before evening; to be greeted on your return from business with the smiles of your wife and the shouts of your children, when you know that any hour the one may be broken-hearted and the other for ever disgraced and degraded. To sit down at the table surrounded with your parents and friends who have come to take a social cup of tea, and every knock at the door send a dagger to your heart; to feel that at least two families may any day be plunged into the deepest depths of woe through your conduct, and your own hopes in this world utterly blasted, irretrievable gone. Oh, sir, this is hell enough. All this I have passed through and seen my darkest prophecies fulfilled. I thought of emigration; I thought of suicide; I thought of prayer, but I durst not pray; and when my two little ones have knelt at their mother's feet saying their "Our Father," I have often left the room to weep in secret. I could not bear the sight; and

sometimes when kissing them I have long held them clasped to my heart, fearing it might be the last time. I then saw the beauty of early piety as I had never seen it before, and had I given my heart to God when my heart was tender; had I been fortified with religion when the temptation came; had I sought shelter near the Cross when the enemy assailed me, I should have saved others untold sorrow and never have come to this place."

With bolts and bars, and massive walls secured, and in his lonely cell, Harry, with the eloquence of despair, made to me the above revelation; the reckoning day had come, as come it will for all crimes, sooner or later, and as he said his darkest prophecies had been fulfilled. But one sentence he uttered made on my mind a very deep impression. He durst not pray. I think he was wrong here; he ought to have prayed. If he neglected at the proper time to pray in earnest, "lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil;" when he had fallen he ought to have prayed for power to go at once

and confess his offence to the person he had wronged, ask for time to pay, and forgiveness. No doubt there would have been risk in doing this; but it would have been the best. I believe to pray, and not intend to practise, when we have the power to repair an injury which we have done, and refuse to do it, is mocking God. Restitution, if possible, must be made. The following may explain what I mean:—

A person in this neighbourhood purchased a pair of stockings at a draper's shop. The price was two and sixpence, in payment he put down a half-sovereign; the draper, thinking it was a sovereign, gave him seventeen shillings and sixpence in exchange, and the man walked away with the stockings and ten shillings of the dealer's money. Not long after the man was under deep conviction for sin, not this sin only, but all his sins, and besought the Lord for Christ's sake to pardon him, and give him peace of mind; but every time he knelt down to pray, the ten shillings rose up before him. He thought he could not obtain forgiveness until

that money was returned. He went to the draper and asked for a private interview. He was taken into a back sitting-room, and there, with shame and contrition, he laid down the half sovereign, nervously confessing his wickedness, told his state of mind, and asked for pardon. The draper was a good man, and at once forgave him, and joined with him in prayer that God would blot out all his iniquities. Their prayers were heard, and the man, like the publican, went down to his house justified; but to this hour he believes that if he had not made restitution by taking back the money, he could never have found mercy. Had Harry taken the same course, though he could not have immediately made restitution, time would probably have been given him, and he might have been saved.

While talking with Harry about his family, his present condition, and his future prospects, and telling him that though for a time he must consider himself an outlaw, and until his sentence was finished, cut off from all the social joys of this life, yet there was

One who never refused the contrite. He could restore joy and peace to the broken-hearted Magdalene, and take the penitent thief with him to Paradise; the burdened and heavy-ladened would ever find in Him a friend; his answer was,—

"It is kind of you to try to comfort me; as for this world it now seems to me a blank; ever since I took the first false step the sunshine of this life departed; spring and summer came and went, but I never seemed to see or feel them; the flowers bloomed, but not for me; the birds sang, but not for me. Oh! if the innocent did but know how priceless their innocence is, no wealth could purchase it. The value of our blessings are the best seen when they are lost. I feel for my poor disgraced parents; I feel deeply for my dear wife and sweet dear children. I have often been tempted to wish I had not one relation to share this bitter cup."

"Yes, Harry, I can to some extent understand your condition. Your relations will hang down their heads, and the memory of you will be to them painful; but it is done,

and cannot be recalled, and if He that reads all hearts sees that you truly repent, and that your breaking heart yearns for the help of the only hand that can bind it up, then, yes then, even in prison, a deep consolation, an unspeakable peace shall be your portion. 'Come unto me, and I will give you rest,' are Christ's blessed words."

Harry rose from the form on which he had been seated, and after walking several times rapidly across the small cell, he stopped before me, and with intense earnestness said—

"I believe there is mercy, even for the chief of sinners, and I will seek it. But tell my friends, and especially my relatives, that though I am suffering the just penalty of my crime, yet if I be spared to have my liberty, I will work night and day to pay back what I have taken. I am no thief at heart. I abhor my crime, and trust the time may yet come, when at least some degree of happiness may be my lot, and the lot of my sorrowing wife and children." Then printing a kiss on my cheek, he said, "Take that to

my little ones, and tell them it is from their unhappy father."

I left Harry with the conviction stronger than ever, that without saving and restraining grace; no man is truly safe from falling into temptation. There is a weak place in every soul that only divinity can guard. Harry fell where many have stumbled. Strict integrity and stern honesty would have shielded him from the loathsome betting man, or purloining his master's goods. Honesty is truly the best policy, and the best security for this is true religion. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace," will ever be true. Some may and do think light of this fact, but amongst them cannot be reckoned poor HARRY.

A DANCER.

"Light-wing'd hopes that come when bid,
Rainbow joys that end in weeping,
Passions strong 'mongst pure thoughts hid,
Like serpents under flowerets sleeping."

ONE of our London Aldermen, in company with a few friends, paid a visit to one of the City Ragged Schools, and began to question the lads on their knowledge of history, the catechism, &c., especially that part of the catechism referring to the promise made by their godfathers and godmothers, when they were baptised. Several of the children answered him cleverly. On asking what they thought the "pomps and vanities of this wicked world" were, one little fellow shot up his hand to show his answer was ready. "Well, my boy," said the Alderman, "what are the pomps and vanities?"

"Lord Mayor's Show," said the boy, amidst a burst of laughing from all the visitors.

No doubt the boy was near the mark, but he would have been nearer still if he had said a fancy ball, where the cotillion, quadrille, waltz, polka, and minuet, are elegantly performed by superbly dressed and scented gentlemen, tripping the light toe, with the half-dressed light-heeled ladies reeling and whirling, to the enchanting sound of music till the dead of night or early morning. I rather think the palm for vanity would be given to the fancy ball.

I am not, and I hope never shall be, one of those morbid, gloomy, creatures that cannot bear to see the natural outburst of exuberant health, in the merry laugh, or hearty innocent play; purity of heart is compatible with joyous cheerfulness.

That He who created all things, and is the source of all good, intends all conscious beings to be happy we have abundant evidence to prove, both in His word and His works; and that happiness is the best secured by a willing compliance with the

written and unwritten requirements of both physical and moral laws. Peace with God through Christ, evidenced by a life of holy labour for God's glory and the good of others, secures the highest possible felicity in this world, and anything or everything that tends to increase or strengthen this highest of all human pleasures must undoubtly be right; and this ought to be the guiding star of all our actions, the regulator of all our pursuits, and the test of all our indulgences, in eating, drinking, dressing, amusements, diversions, entertainments, or recreations, then all becomes a joy and a blessing. But when the object and purpose of pleasure is a mere carnal or sensual indulgence, then it invariably becomes a curse, proved, a thousand times proved, by countless miserable victims, and Annie, the prominent figure in this sketch, is one.

Annie was one of those girls, too frequently found in our schools, our workshops, and in service, who give early indications of impatience under restraint, and love to follow their own desires and vain propen-

sities, without reflecting on the consequences, and one who it was easy to prophesy would bring trouble on herself. She loved finery, Saturday afternoon and Sunday walks, and what are called amusements, especially dancing; and in this day, when so many allurements and temptations are held out by the unprincipled to decoy the young, this propensity for dancing was a dangerous besetment.

That amusements and recreations differ in character, quality, and moral influence, there is no doubt. While some are comparatively innocent, others are calculated and are often intended to minister to the lower and baser propensities of our nature; and dancing, especially mixed dancing, has this tendency,

> "When blended sexes meet, then hand in hand
> Fast lock'd, around they fly, or nimbly wheel
> In mazes intricate;"

This is no doubt very agreeable to unsanctified hearts, but he would be a bad reasoner that could not calculate the effects. Many a sorrowing parent can tell how their dear

ones have fallen; many a Sunday-school teacher tell of those that have disappeared from the class to hide themselves, in grief and shame, through a foolish love of dancing.

How Annie learned to dance her parents do not know; they first heard of her performing in one of those vistibules of perdition, a public dancing stage, kept by one of those agents of Satan, a publican, for sordid gain. These stages are found to be profitable to their wicked owners, and attractive to the gay, the foolish, and the simple. Bands are engaged to rouse and stimulate the young to join in the giddy whirl; the harp and the fiddle lend their thrilling sounds; hired performers of questionable character are kept as baits to catch the innocent, and fiery drinks to inflame. They are often called by the most attractive names: Tea-gardens, Alhambra, Tiptoe Temple, &c.; but no youth that values his self-respect, no female that possesses one particle of modesty, will degrade themselves by stepping on those boards. Hearts now broken have once been there; the blood of souls dying and dead,

clings to every timber, and none but those on the road to ruin could ever be found to patronise them.

Parents who care for the morals of their children, will form some idea of the sorrow of Annie's mother when she first heard of her daughter dancing on a stage in connection with public pleasure grounds, and a public house. She knew that nothing but evil could spring from evil; and with unspeakable distress of mind she intreated her never to be seen there again, pointing out the consequence by referring to several young women who had made shipwreck of every virtue, and brought themselves and others to untold distress and trouble. Annie partly promised her mother that she would go no more, but she did not keep her promise; she excelled in dancing, and her desire to exhibit her ability and her love of flattery was stronger than her regard for her mother's peace of mind, or her own salvation. Again and again she mingled with the giddy throng, frequently returning home late in the evening; the tears, entreaties, persua-

sions, or threatenings of her parents were all of no use; the Sunday-school was given up, she seldom appeared at church, and at last through her conduct was forced to leave home.

That dancing, especially mixed dancing, young men and young women dancing together, has been a snare to hundreds besides Annie, admits of no doubt; and yet, like every questionable indulgence, it finds many defenders, and perhaps never more than at the present time. While these defenders would scarcely dare to apologise for the love of dancing in poor Annie, and her vulgar exhibition of her favorite amusement, yet they are loud in their praises of dancing as a very healthy exercise, calculated to strengthen the lungs, develope the muscle, rectify the nerves, correct defects in walking, and produce elasticity of step; that it is a physical necessity, and education cannot be considered complete without a knowledge of dancing. These are the stock arguments used by parents and guardians who can afford to send their children to the dancing

school, to be drilled in the precise, severe, artificial step, alike for all, whatever the difference in physical capability. The expense and trouble in learning having been great, of course opportunities must be sought to exhibit and show off the attainments, especially if at a marriageable age. But dancing damsels make sorry wives. I rather the bat, the ball, and the climbing pole, the hoop, the swing, and the skipping rope, can do all this quite as well, far more naturally, with less of the foolishly precise, and tediously artificial, and that the boys and girls of our common schools and village greens will compare favorably in health, action, and vigour with those who have passed through the hands of an artistic dancing master. Apologists for dancing are generally lovers of the world, and the things of the world, who are blinded by the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things. Having no object in life, time hangs heavy on their hands, and to break the monotony of an indolent, useless existence, they seek for excitement in outward things: theatres,

balls, concerts, card tables, billiards, watering places, &c., and they undoubtedly are the most miserable part of the community, the most to be pitied and prayed for.

But what is most surprising, some professors of religion, and even holding offices in the church, are found amongst defenders of artistic and mixed dancing; and what is worse still, they try to justify their opinions and conduct by an appeal to the Bible. They tell us that Miriam danced; that David danced; that they danced when the prodigal son returned. We admit that Miriam did dance, and said as she was dancing, "Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously." Her joy was boundless for the great deliverance God had wrought for long oppressed Israel. David and the elders of Israel went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the house of Obed-Edom to the tent he had pitched for it in Jerusalem; that mysterious, sacred ark, the visible symbol of God's presence, and so great was his joy that he danced before it, and well he might. And

the dancing mentioned at the return of the prodigal son, was indicative of joy for the restoration of the lost one. The dancing mentioned in the Bible was clearly a religious exercise, an outburst of exuberant gladness and gratitude for great blessings sent of God; or a solemn act of praise; but never performed by the mixed sexes, and never in the night; and they were regarded as wicked and infamous persons who perverted dancing from its sacred use.

But those who try to make the Bible sanction their folly, will perhaps remember the cost of one dance mentioned in the fourteenth of Matthew. Herodias seems to have been a woman very likely either to dance herself or have a dancing daughter; she had two husbands alive, but she left her first husband, Herod Philip, to marry his more rich and powerful brother Herod Antipas, a most scandalous affair, and John the Baptist saw it his duty to reprove Herod for their shameful conduct and unlawful connection. This honesty and faithfulness brought down upon him the wrath of the adultress, and

she planned his destruction. Salome, her well-trained dancing daughter, was the selected instrument for carrying out her vengeance. When Herod's birthday came, it seems to have been kept up, like many still are, in revel and riot; and the young lady danced before him so exquisitely that his passions were aroused, he promised, with an oath, to give her whatsoever she would ask, and she, being *before instructed of her mother*, said, "Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger;" Herod sent and beheaded John in the prison, and thus the prophet and preacher in the wilderness, he that baptised the World's Redeemer in Jordan, and according to Christ's own testimony, the greatest man born of woman, was cruelly murdered at the instigation of this dancing daughter of a wicked mother; and his head was brought in a dish and given to the light-heeled damsel, and she brought it to her mother, and very likely they both danced together over the success of their deep laid scheme.

Depend upon it, this atrocious event is

not recorded as a mere link in the biography of John; it is a great moral lesson, teaching us that the most fiendish cruelty can lurk in the breast of half-robed gaiety, and that the dance of one may cause another to weep, and that a dance can and did subserve the purpose of lust.

But no doubt it will be said,—Why quote Salome or Annie, their's are exceptional cases; dancers are not all so heartless as they were.

Perhaps not; it would be wrong to say they were, but it is not many years since a young woman went to take a last interview with her brother, who was condemned to be executed the following morning. So strong was her love of dancing, she left that brother's cell, went to a public dance, and there, hand in hand, arm in arm with a young man, whirled round and round in the polka and other dances until late in the evening; reckless as some of her companions were, this unfeeling conduct rather shocked them. That young lady, then so active, and blooming, and gay, now lies in an early grave,

and was carried to that grave from the Union Workhouse. Salome and she would have been fit companions.

One of our quaint old authors tells us, "As apothecaries do cover their pills with some sweet substance, whereby to make them go down the easier; so the devil, under the sport and pleasure of dances, maketh man to swallow lustful desires; and albeit they proceed to no greater iniquity, yet is this a mortal wound to the soul, considering that we know that such lusts are accursed in the sight of God."

And what is dancing now, either on the open stage where Annie fell, in our ball-rooms, or our social gatherings? Is it an exuberant or solemn act of praise for great deliverances, a religious observance to the glory of God, as those recorded in the Scriptures often were, or are they wicked and infamous assemblies? If there be a place in this world where the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life may be seen in full bloom, it is in the ball-room. There

"The gaudy bands advance in trim array,
Lust beats in every vein, from eye to eye
Darts his contagious flames."

Ball-rooms find ample work for divorce courts. The ball-room is the hot-bed of troubled consciences. Floods of tears have followed in the wake of public, fancy, and fashionable balls. Hearts, bleeding and bruised, have there received their deadly wound. When the sexes mingle in such dances, real modesty gradually withers; true virtue, the virtue of the heart sickens and dies, and from its ashes often spring the scoffer and scorner of humble piety.

Performers or defenders of mixed dancing, if they have anything at all to do with religion, and attend any of our churches, will be at least but lukewarm, but more probably those of whom the church is ashamed, and over whom it mourns, as lovers of the world more than lovers of God, and often stumbling-blocks to others. Depend upon it, the truly godly, the earnest, consistent worker in our Sunday-schools and churches; those who have experienced a

change of heart, and try to tread in the steps of the meek and lowly Jesus; who sigh and cry over the sins of the people, will never be found defending or practising dancing. We cannot serve God and conform to the world.

Annie found, as all such do find, that she could now disregard all religious influence; she left the school and church; left her home, preferring her foolish and vain pleasures to the house of God or her home duties; letting go her hold of what might have saved her from sinking in the whirlpool of folly and sin. Her heart grew harder and harder; the good advice of teachers, relations, and friends was lost upon her; and to avoid all restraint she left the neighbourhood altogether. For several months nothing was known respecting her; then intelligence came that she was working in a mill in a neighbouring town; then again that she had gone no one knew where; then that she was begging her bread, a poor, miserable creature in dirty rags and tatters. A kind woman at whose door she knocked asking for a drink of water,

took her into the house, gave her a little bread, and covered her rags with an old black dress; she urged her to tell her where she came from, and asked if she had any relations. Annie told her all, and with the assistance of the good woman was restored to the home she had left in haughtiness, pride, and self-will, but now a wretched, degraded thing, almost dead of sickness brought on by her own wickedness.

When Annie's father was telling me of her fearful ruin, and the trouble and sorrow she had brought on them all, he expressed his conviction that her love of dancing had been the downward step; the fatal besetment, the snare which crushed from her heart all regard for self-respect, and when a woman loses her self-respect, everything lovely has departed.

Have not dancing rooms led to this irreparable loss to others besides Annie? and is this to be at all wondered at? Are they not amongst the worst of men, the most corrupt in heart and life, that devise these dancing parties? Loose in morals them-

selves they have little regard for the morals of others, and a midnight revel with women and wine, is a sensual gratification just adapted to their sensual nature. In nine cases out of ten this is the true origin of all balls and all dancing parties; and it is sad to see how women are so willing to be caught in the trap. If these officious gentlemen had to dance by themselves it would be a jubilee dance,—once in fifty years. But I think that these devisers of polkas and jigs have hitherto been consistent in one thing. I have never heard of them proposing to open even a charity ball, or any other dance with prayer; asking God's blessing on what they were going to do. They have not yet dared to insult heaven by such an impious act.

And here is my point: Ought any of our Sunday scholars or teachers, any making a profession of religion in any of our churches, to sanction, by their presence, or defend in any degree what they cannot, and dare not ask God to bless? Are we not enjoined to do all to the glory of God, and are the ob-

scene, mixed midnight dances of the present day, to His glory? If they are not, what is our duty respecting them but to shun them, under whatever pretence they are devised, in whatever place they are held, as insulting to all true modesty, degrading to womanly dignity, and destructive of all true piety. Jigs and psalms, polkas and true prayers, can never go together, and the voice of love and mercy bids us flee youthful lusts that war against the soul; and as we value our peace of mind, our true happiness in this world, and our hopes of reigning with Christ in the other world, to come out from amongst them, and be separated at whatever cost, and rather choose affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Heaven has solemnly decreed, and oh, how true are the words! that "she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth."

Dancers have troubled consciences, except they are past feeling. A young woman about the age of Annie was one evening requested by her mother to read a portion of God's word before retiring to rest. She took

hold of the Bible, but was silent. Her mother, surprised at not hearing her voice, looked in her face to see the cause. Tears were running down her cheeks. The mother, alarmed, asked what was the matter.

"Mother, I have been to a dance, and feel unworthy to touch the holy book," was the daughter's sorrowful reply.

The mother, a good woman, was grieved to hear her child had been to a dance, but that grief was mitigated by finding her conscience was not seared, and that she was penitent for her sin. The Bible was not read that night, and they both retired to their beds in sadness.

Had Annie, and thousands besides her, given ear to the voice of the Holy Book, they would not have been the ruined creatures they now are. Ancient history tells us what dancing women always were, and modern history tells us what they yet are. In all ages they have been the thoughtless and vain, proving that

The less the brains,
The lighter the head.

Annie has suffered much, and is still suffering, from her folly, bitterly proving that sin shall not go unpunished. One lesson more to the thoughtful, and prudent, and wise, that, like Mary, choose the good part, the one thing needful, preferring to sit at the feet of Jesus, and hearing His words, to all the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and to such there is more real joy in a single hour, more than can give true pleasure, than can be found in the whole life of a DANCER.

MRS. BOWDEN.

THE three thousand wives and mothers assembled in Edinburgh, Newcastle, Leicester, and Blackburn, to hear addresses from one who had often met similar gatherings in other towns, presented scenes and suggested thoughts widely in contrast. There was no difficulty in detecting the persons by whose moving power the vast multitude were influenced and brought together: they quietly took their places amongst the mothers under their special care, without parade or ostentation, standing out from others by that indefinable something which education and religion ever gives. The wives and mothers, though crowded together, had also their individuality,—the truly beautiful, the merry and happy, the sedate and thoughtful, the

fair and fat, mingled with the lean and care-worn, the pale and sickly, the careless and easy; nor would it have been very difficult to tell from the appearance and countenance, which of them had good children, good husbands, and lived in sweet homes.

But no gathering of females that I have witnessed has exceeded in interest the one we had in Milton Church, in our own town, on the evening of the sixth of January last. At the expense of one who honours the Lord with part of what the Lord has trusted him, five hundred and fifty widows met together, sat down to their favourite repast, and for a few hours seemed to enjoy the company of each other. Though the object in bringing them together was to make them as cheerful and happy as possible, to get better acquainted with their social, temporal, and moral condition, and to speak to them words of peace and comfort, still the thought could not be withheld, that all of them had worn weeds of woe, the sable emblems of the departed, that the hand that had brought them bread, the arm that had been their shield,

and the hearts that had held them dear were all laid in the dust. Every one of those five hundred and fifty widows had her history, and one part of that history was linked with the tomb.

It was no easy undertaking to speak to this chastened assembly: human language would fail to sound the depths of their emotion. The words of Him who multiplied the widow's oil, raised the widow's son, saw the widow's mite, and says let the widows trust in me, seemed the most suitable to the requirements of the moment, and received the best response of many hearts. Numbers in that memorable meeting I knew; many of them attend our Chapel for the Destitute. One of them recently left us, who for several years sat with five other aged females on the same form, richly enjoying the means of grace, and now, with her husband who died eight years ago, she counts amongst the dead, and I have thought a few words on the late years of her life may be of use to the living.

The very word, "widow," calls forth more or

less sympathy, and where it is associated with a group of helpless children, we know that in most cases it means a protracted struggle and many trials. The oldest child of five, and herself only seven years of age, once said to her mother,—

"Mother, since my father died, I have often seen you go up stairs with a sad and sorrowful face, which makes me feel poorly; but when you come down again, your face shines: what do you do at your face, mother?"

Poor little thing, she did not then understand that her mother went up stairs to spread her troubles before Him who knows all sorrow, can help in time of need, and make his children happy in every affliction.

Mrs. Bowden, the subject of this sketch, had no little children, they were grown up when she lost her husband, nor did she resemble the praying mother in her religious views and feelings. She sometimes went to church, but more frequently spent her Sabbath in dusting, rubbing, cooking, eating, and sleeping, probably caring more for her polished drawers and bright fender, than

for the house of God, or the salvation of her own soul, consequently her Sabbaths instead of being hours of peace, holiness, and joy, were mostly days of langour, yawning, and weariness; and we fear she was a true type of thousands. After her husband's death, she began to be more thoughtful; she saw how solemn a thing it was to die, and knew if she had been called away, she was not prepared. She attended more regularly some place of worship, her true condition became more and more revealed, the light entered her dark mind, and in mercy she became convinced she was a sinner.

And now commenced a struggle more important, and momentous in its results, than anything that can possibly engage the human soul. She knew that she had wasted years of priceless value, sinned against God, grieved His Holy Spirit, and that His frown rested upon her. What was she to do? Many in this state of mind to quench the striving of the Spirit have fled to theatres balls, billiards, concerts, operas, novels, pleasuring places, social parties, and drink. God

be merciful to me a sinner, is the prayer they seem determined never to offer up. God calls, but they refuse. He stretches forth His hand of mercy, but they regard it not; and what might have culminated in pardon and peace, sinks them deeper and deeper into guilt and misery, and they swell the number of the great cloud of witnesses who prove that there is no peace to the wicked. What a mercy this was not Mrs. Bowden's case! She, like Bunyan's pilgrim, felt her burden grow heavier and heavier. She went from chapel to church, and from church to chapel, and at last to the Chapel for the Poor, and there, bathed in tears of penitence, contrition, and sorrow, the still small voice whispered "thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace!" and then she felt what millions have before her felt, how precious Christ is to them that believe. Her new-born joy filled her soul with unspeakable felicity, filling her mouth with praise and thanksgiving. She spoke about it to her neighbours, told all her fellow-worshippers at the Chapel. Like the poor man out of whom Christ cast the de-

mons, she told what great things the Lord had done for her. The dark, dark cloud of guilt that shrouded in its folds the hearts of woe, was lifted up, and the smiling beams of heaven came down upon her happy soul.

It is painful to hear persons professing to believe the Bible, call in question the doctrine of the conscious pardon of sin. Those sweet portions of God's word which to God's children are so precious, because expressive of their own experience, are to such words without meaning. There must be a spiritual birth or no heaven. To have it and not know it is to remain ignorant of God's greatest gift,—a gift which, when felt, produces the greatest joy: being justified by faith we have peace with God, and that peace must have a beginning, or there can be no peace. A doubter on this great question, residing in Yorkshire, who held high office in the church, speaking to one of his flock on the subject, said,—

"I do not believe that anybody can tell when their sins are forgiven, except at the

point of death, and I question if they know then."

"I am of the same way of thinking," replied the woman, "and I think it is all talk when I hear people say they can tell."

This woman had a daughter who came to be a servant in Lancashire, and fortunately for her the new home contained a family altar. One morning the master, while praying for the salvation of the whole household, made mention of several by name, and amongst them was the name of the new servant. A few days after, the servant sought a private interview with the mistress, and told her how unhappy she was.

"Are you not satisfied with your place?" enquired the mistress.

"O yes, I am well pleased with my situation, but I wish to tell you that I have been concerned about my soul ever since my master prayed for my salvation. The prayer sunk deep into my heart, and I want to know what I must do to be saved."

The mistress, placing her hand on the shoulder of the servant, answered,—"O

Mary, I am so glad you have told me; and now sit down, and we will read, and talk, and pray about your sorrow, for I hope it will soon be turned into joy, for God never turns a penitent away, nor wounds without intending to heal."

For several hours, during the several following days, the good lady explained the scriptures, especially the third chapter of John, and pleaded with God on her behalf; then came the great change, Mary and her mistress rejoiced together.

If scenes like this were more frequent in the houses of the wealthy, there would not be so many registering offices, or so many servants' boxes at our railway stations.

About three months after Mary's conversion, she requested permission to go and see her mother, for she had received a letter informing her that she was not quite well. Leave was given her, and away by the coach she went, arriving after her mother had retired to rest. Mary first ran up stairs to kiss her mother, and asked how she was, then took off her bonnet and shawl, and made herself

a cup of tea. Before blowing out her candle for the night, Mary asked her mother if she might read a psalm.

"Yes, child, if you wish," was the answer.

Mary read the ninety-first Psalm, and after a pause said, "Mother, must I pray with you?"

"Yes; but can you pray without a book, child?"

"Praying is telling God what we want, with humility and truth, mother."

Mary knelt down and after thanking God for her own salvation, prayed earnestly for the salvation of her mother,—so earnestly that the mother was much astonished and affected. During the following day, at the request of her mother, Mary read and prayed with her many times; she felt herself a poor sinner, and sought a Saviour; and before Mary returned to her place of service, she had the unspeakable joy of hearing her mother tell that she had found Jesus. The same day, the man high in office in the church called to see her; the moment he entered, she said,—

"I am glad you have called, please sit down, for I must tell you we have both been wrong: we may possess conscious forgiveness of sin and peace through believing. I know we may, for through the shed blood of Christ, and the instrumentality of my dear child, I now enjoy it. What a mercy! What a mercy!"

The gentleman rose up, walked towards the window, looked out, and began to whistle, then turning to the daughter, he said,—

"Young woman, I think your mother is not so well to-day, she is evidently rambling; good morning."

"Rambling!" replied the mother, with a smile, "rambling! I wish I had rambled thirty years since."

What a mercy, that this great question of a knowledge of sins forgiven is so plainly taught in God's own word. He there tells us, that the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. David said, "I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and Thou forgavest

the iniquity of my sin. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us. Blessed is he whose transgressions is forgiven." And Paul in the Acts says, "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."

Amongst the many happy people attending the Chapel for the Destitute, none seemed to enjoy the means more than Mrs. Bowden. She called the week-night service her little Sunday, a lift by the way, the green spot in the wilderness; and it was truly cheering to see her and a crowd of poor people, many with shawls on their heads instead of bonnets, and clogs on their feet instead of shoes, but all clean and orderly, take their accustomed places on the Thursday evening, and all join in praise and prayer. The wide contrast betwixt some of their homes and this house of peace made it to many of them a Bethel indeed. These poor, dear people, many of whom, like Mrs. Bowden, had found the pearl of great price, highly value these little Sundays. In all churches a love for the

social means of grace is one sign of spiritual health in either rich or poor; and those that are the most anxious to increase their spiritual strength will esteem these the most highly. When we try to find arguments against class meetings, church meetings, prayer meetings, &c., it is an indication that we are not very fast growing in grace; we need these helps by the way. The world daily rolls in upon us, and we need a strong arm to roll it back, to keep it in its proper place. Means are required, and the week-day means are often a powerful check.

Mrs. Bowden experienced the truth of our Lord's words, "In me ye have peace;" but she had one great anxiety: all her family were not saved. That they all might find the Saviour she had found her earnest, constant prayer. The intensity of this wish can only be understood by those that have experienced it. To have a husband or a wife, a brother or a sister, walking down to eternal death, heedless of all entreaties or persuasions, is an unspeakable trouble.

I recently saw three sisters weeping over

their wayward brother, not because he had disgraced himself or them by any open sin or breach of the law, but because he turned a deaf ear to heaven's warnings, and walked in the way of the ungodly. They feared for his never-dying soul. This was Mrs. Bowden's case. All her children were not walking in the way to heaven, and this at times gave her great concern. One of her sons sat at the fire ill of consumption, coughing himself into the grave, and her anxiety on his account grew stronger every day; he had a strange temper, was very irritable and impatient in his affliction, nothing seemed to impress him; this distressed her much. She tried all means to do him good in body and soul, but received few thanks and little encouragement. She was never tired of talking about him, and glad when any one called to see him. His sickness was long, and required much attention. This affected his mother's health, but she frequently said,—

"I will nurse him, and do all I can for him, to the last moment; but I cannot bear to think of him being lost for ever; the

thought of this very near kills me. Oh! if his soul was saved how I should rejoice."

The last time she attended the Chapel, she was suffering from a severe cold, and made it much worse, but the circumstances of that night were so peculiar, that some allowance must be made for her indiscretion.

Many in Rochdale and neighbourhood will long remember the last Sabbath of last year. Mingled sorrow and thankfulness will ever be associated with an event that transpired on that day. The Wesleyans of Union Street had long desired to extend their influence to a growing hamlet, just outside the town, and for this purpose built a place for the preaching of the gospel and a Sabbath school, near the junction of Clark's Lane and Mitchell Street, on the Spotland Road. I was requested to take one of the opening services. The dedicating of new places of worship is an opportune time for displaying Christian union amongst Christian professors, and breaking through that narrow sectarian bigotry that withers and chills Christian effort. Having recently

conducted published services for thirteen differently named churches, I have learned to love them all, and find that if we were all more shaken up together, we should better display Christian charity, and exhibit to the world one true test of discipleship,—Loving each other. If Satan could laugh, he would laugh the loudest at seeing the professed followers of the meek and lowly Jesus quarrelling, or standing aloof from each other in supercilious dignity, and in their self-righteousness dispising others. If the words, "He that exalteth himself shall be abased," were well considered, few would dare to say "the temple of the Lord are *we*." Profess what we will, we never are in the true place until we feel we could wash each other's feet.

The day on which the new place of worship in Spotland Road was opened was fearfully stormy; a hurricane, terrible in its consequences, swept across the country, levelling to the ground many buildings in course of erection. About ten minutes to four, its fury was so terrible, and its force so

irresistible, that our building gave way, the entire gable fell upon the people, the two side walls followed, the roof—for a moment held up by the tremendous force of the storm—come down in one mass, and the screams and groans of the buried multitude rose above the roaring storm. One wall still remained. Near this wall I stood with closed eyes and bowed head, believing that my last moment was come. The scene that immediately followed was truly distressing: the maimed, bruised, bleeding, and terrified, forced their way from under the ruins, and in wild dismay ran through the drenching rain and howling blast. Crowds gathered round to assist the helpless sufferers. Firemen, doctors, and policemen, relatives and friends, rendered all possible assistance, and to the amazement of every one, there was not one killed. Over thirty were injured, several for life, and one has since died.

As the report of the calamity spread over the town, its horrors were magnified; many were said to be slain, and I amongst the number. Our people belonging to the

Chapel for the Destitute were in great trouble, and though the storm still raged, they came to the evening service under great excitement. But though I had not received the slightest injury, the sight I had just witnessed rendered me unfit to conduct the service, and a kind friend supplied my place. Mrs. Bowden, though in poor health, could not be persuaded to remain at home. She wrapped her shawl around her, and pushed through the storm, and rejoiced with them all that the life of their pastor was saved; but she came no more.

When James, the consumptive son, saw his mother's health fail, it softened him to some extent; but he was long before he showed signs of repentance towards God. When persons, either in sickness or health, persistently refuse to be reconciled to their Maker, it is a proof of the grossest ignorance, or downright wickedness. "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life," principally applies to the latter, but I think it was the former in Jame's case; and I found, in speaking to him, simplicity and patience

was required; the A B C of God's plan of saving sinners had to be taught him.

The time came when neither of them could rise from a sick bed, and it became a question which of them would first depart. Another son, who had been very kind to his widowed mother and sick brother, had long provided for all their wants, proving again that true religion always leads us to honour our parents. When this good son heard of his mother's dangerous illness, he brought his family to see her. One of the children, about four years old, after looking a long time in silence in the face of the aged sufferer, said,—

"Grandmother, pray to Jesus; he can make you well again."

This sentence from the little grandchild filled the soul of the dying saint with rapture. The name of Jesus for five years had been to her precious; and that name spoken by the mouth of a babe, and that babe her own son's child, was a joy indeed. As soon as she could speak, she said,—

"I know Jesus can make me well, dear;

but I am going to where I shall see him, and then I shall be poorly no more."

Mrs. Bowden's last hours were calculated to cheer workers in the Lord's vineyard. My fellow-labourers yet speak of happy moments they enjoyed in witnessing her serene countenance, and hearing her tell of her glorious prospects. When her head was raised a little, she could see her son in the other bed, who, like herself, was fast sinking towards the grave. Her prayers for him often greatly affected his heart; and when she heard him pray for himself, tears of joy would stream down her pale face.

I felt it a solemn moment to kneel between the two beds, where two immortal spirits were just stepping on the borders of the invisible world; the mother was not without hope for the son, and the son prayed to be buried the same day as his mother. His request was granted. On the day of the funeral, February 13th, the two coffins were brought out of the cottage in Lomax Street, together, and over the same grave, at the same moment, the solemn service was read

over mother and son. I often look at the place Mrs. Bowden once occupied amongst us. Another has taken her seat in the temple below, who I hope will yet meet her in the temple above.

THE FOG BELL.

To sit in silence on the rugged cliffs and bold headlands of our sea-girt Isle, looking out on the vast expanse of the solemn sea, or to walk on the glittering sands of the outstretched shore,

> Watching the wake of the curling wave,
> Till in whispers it dies at our feet,

are moments that give humbling views and useful thoughts to man's proud soul, for they tell of his weakness, and forcibly remind him of his insignificance. Thrones and kingdoms rise and fall, countless ages pass away, but the ocean still rolls on, in storm, or gale, or breeze, or calm; awful when waves, and winds, and clouds contend; glorious, when reflecting on its placid bosom the solar beams,

or giving back the image of the countless stars, wonderous orbs of heaven, mirrored in the wondrous deep, suggesting thoughts of another world. The dark depths of water that plummets never fathom, tell few tales; their records are kept back until the sea gives up its dead, but the shoals, sandbanks, sunken rocks, and breakers have each their own story; they have heard the mariners' cry in the perilous hour. The guides and warnings that stud our shore in landmarks, lighted towers, life-boats, storm signals, and fog-bells, are monuments of sad events of the past, but intended as blessings for the future. One of these, the Fog-bell, is connected with this narrative.

The fisherman's huts scattered amongst the mounds of grass and drift called the sand-hills, on the west side of Southport, were anciently designated North Meols, but now Church Town. The first settlers in these huts were a primitive race, subsisting principally on fish and potatoes. One of them, named William Sutton, but known by the sounding title of Old Duke, built a

log-house near the shore, from the timbers of a large ship wrecked on the sands in 1792. This log cabin he christened the King's Arms, others called it the Duke's Folly. The memorial lamp in Lord Street, stands on the site once occupied by this tavern, built from the ribs of the wrecked schooner. Up to this period the broad black beach, bounded by cheerless sand-hills held the name of South Haws, but at a convivial gathering at the Old Duke's, a Dr. Barton proposed the present designation, hence the origin of the name, Southport.

But South Haws then, and Southport now, are widely and astonishingly different places. Situated on the West Coast of England, its air is mild and salubrious, and invalids or persons of delicate constitutions find a permanent or even temporary residence greatly beneficial; retired tradesmen and merchant princes have built their palaces in its park or noble streets; magnificent hotels, vastly different from Old Duke's Folly, now rear their lofty heads on the extended shore, and not the least important is a Temperance

hotel. Churches, chapels, marts, boarding-houses, hospitals, sanitoriums, piers, and promenades, adorn and enliven the grand new city,—"The Montpelier of the North."

But the thatched cottages and scattered huts amongst the mounds of North Meols still remain; the fishermen, many of them shrimpers, with their numerous families, have to some extent felt the influence of their wealthy, educated neighbours, and some improvement in their morals and intelligence is now visible, though one portion from some cause bears the name of Little Island; yet even this place shows a visible improvement. Miss Waterhouse, encouraged by the help of many friends, has planted and teaches an infant and ragged school in their midst, residing and working there night and day, and is an unspeakable blessing, especially to the children; she, in the kindness of her heart, is exercising an influence for good that shall go down the stream of time for many generations. On the day I visited this school, I became better acquainted with an event, that will long be remembered

amongst the homes of the fishermen, and will be handed down from father to son, as a dark day amongst the tribes who gain a scanty living from the dangerous deep.

About one in the morning of Tuesday, the 26th of January last, seven men, with their baskets and long poles, on one end of which hung the net from a cross yard, set out, as they had often done before, to "put" for shrimps; the morning was fine and clear, the sea reflecting the moon's beams like waves of polished silver. On they went in their strong high boots, through mud, soft sand, and shallow water, until they arrived at the fishing ground; how long they were there before a dense fog enveloped them, cannot now be told. They were expected back about seven in the morning, but not returning, many feared they had lost their way. About nine, five other fishermen setting out in boats to catch bait, found four nets, six baskets, and two hats; they suspected at once that some calamity had befallen the shrimpers, and in haste returned towards the shore. The fog had a little sub-

sided, but it was still so dense that the wives, children, and friends of the missing men were spread out on the coast, shouting and blowing the fog-horn to guide them to their homes. When they saw the hats, baskets, and nets, they, in an agony of fear, cried loudly for help. On the turn of the tide several groups eagerly set out in various directions still shouting, but receiving no answer; soon the worst fears were realized; one body was found in the direction of the Lytham lighthouse, then four more near the Horse-bank, and then other two, all dead, and each tied to his net pole. Fast flew the tidings of this sad calamity far and wide; carts were taken down the sands, all seven carefully laid side by side, and amidst the wailing and anguish of mothers, widows, and fatherless children, the carts slowly wended their way to the sorrow-stricken homes leaving at each door, the dear dead body of son, husband, or father, amidst the tears and sobs, not only of relations, but many of the stout-hearted lookers on.

The report of the dire catastrophe spread

a gloom not only over homes at Marsh Side and the sand-hills, but over the whole town of Southport. What can be done to lessen the sorrow or lighten the stroke was asked on every hand! Sympathisers met together, the rich and benevolent gave out of their abundance, and the widow gave her mite; all that could be done was done to mitigate the grief and soothe the sorrowing sufferer; but though this is commendable, yet how feeble is human help in such moments of grief! Humble trust in God, and hope for the dead, is then the greatest comfort to the living: this hope and trust is now the consolation of the many bereaved, especially to the family in the thatched cottage at Moss Side, once the humble home of Peter Wright.

Peter was a fine young man, the youngest of the seven drowned, but the oldest son of his widowed mother, who had lost her husband a few months before. On the day of his father's funeral, looking on his six young brothers and three sisters, he said,—

"Mother, whatever must we do? I will

try to be a good lad, work hard, and help you all I can."

Peter redeemed his promise, and became the comfort and principal stay of the whole house, gathering the harvest of the sea, or any other work by which he could earn a few shillings to buy bread for so many helpless eaters.

What a blessing it is when the oldest child of a family is a good child! When the one that must have a considerable influence over the rest, makes that influence tell for the good of all. Many a family deprived of their parents, have been kept together and reared in intelligence and piety by the kind, thoughtful oldest brother or sister, carefully and patiently watching over those more helpless than themselves; whatever may be the character of the firstborn, that character will considerably influence the others for good or evil, their power being next to the power of a parent.

On calling at the thatched cottage once the residence of Peter, in company with Mr. McCormack and Mrs. Bagshawe, then

on a visit to Southport, we found the house small, but neat and clean. Jane, one of the elder girls, sat at a square table, preparing shrimps for the market, and with marvellous dexterity separated the small fish from the thin shell. On enquiring for her mother, she informed us she was gone to Southport to receive her weekly portion of the money subscribed for their relief at the time her brother was drowned. As she uttered the last sentence, her colour changed and the tear stood in her eye. On asking the age of her brother, she pointed to a framed funeral card that hung on the wall. Under Peter's name were the impressive lines of Heber:—

"Thou art gone to the grave,—but 'twere wrong to deplore thee,
When God was thy ransom, thy guardian and guide;
He gave thee and took thee, and soon will restore thee,
And death hath no sting, since the Saviour hath died."

Before we left the mother returned, a younger sister and several of her little brothers came home from school, and all quietly sat down

round their small room. Our conversation was about their present condition, their future prospects, and the two now no more; and with much pleasure I learned that the father, during his life, was a steady, consistent member of a Christian church, that the Bible was read to his numerous household, and that beneath the thatched roof had been reared the family altar. Let the careless living say what they may, these are sweet thoughts about the dead.

Speaking of how Peter and the other six neighbours who perished with him met their fate, we found that most of it was conjecture; but it is supposed they lost their way in the fog, and instead of taking their road home, they had wandered about more than two miles out of their proper course, until the tide gathered around them, when escape became impossible. Their cries for help were heard from the Lytham shore, but it was thought to be the shouting of boatmen calling to each other. At last the rolling waves that have stilled many a cry came over them, and none escaped to tell the true tale. The

kind-hearted Robert Wright and his young friend John Wright, were found tied together, Rimmer, Hesketh, Aughton, and the two both named Peter Wright, the one married, and the other the son and brother of the sad group around us, had fallen separately, and all of them about five miles from home.

Few men can tell how, when, or where their earthly existence will terminate, but we all know we must die, and none are truly wise that are not ready. The future in its importance so immeasurably transcends the present, that it is madness to make the present our chief concern, and thereby neglect the future. The farmer, whose grounds had brought forth plentifully, cared for nothing but building new barns, eating, drinking, and being merry; but he was a fool, and in the midst of his folly was suddenly called to his account. The rich man clothed in purple and fine linen every day, caring for none but himself, had to leave the world, and we know what is now his condition in the next. It was a terrible hour for the five foolish

virgins, who found the door for ever shut against them, because they had not prepared to enter. We know that when the "London" foundered at sea, bags of gold, the once treasured property of those that were in the sinking ship, lay scattered on the deck, useless then; the preservation of life, and the safety of the unsaved soul, absorbed every other consideration. The man who stands ready, awaiting for the summons that may come any minute,—ready because he feels that he is a sinner saved by grace, saved by the shed blood of Christ, is the only truly wise man.

What were the last words or the last thoughts of the seven fishermen in their last moments, when the rushing currents, rising sea, and impenetrable fog rendered escape impossible, will never be known to mortals. He only, before whom we must all appear, saw their last moments, and heard their last prayers, and let us hope that their cry for mercy was heard by Him who is full of mercy. Peter's home training and the teachings of

that Bible waiting to be presented on the following Sunday, would be invaluable to him in that awful hour.

During the interview with the family, we learned how deeply the young man had been loved by them all. Jane was too affected to speak much, but when she said, "We miss Peter very much; he did all he could for both mother and us; he was a good son and a good brother," the sorrowful faces of both mother and young children told how truly she spoke; we could not look on the sad group without feeling thankful that those who had been their teachers had left them so good an example. The father leading them to the house of God, making the day of rest a means of increasing his spiritual riches, and gathering strength for the conflicts of life, and sowing in their young hearts what we trust will yet yield a good harvest.

Peter, having been early led to the Sunday School, prized it exceedingly, and had he lived would probably have become a pillar in the house of God. He was greatly

esteemed by all his young friends, of whom he had many in the Sunday School; he never entered a public-house, or wasted precious time in standing at the corners of streets, or rambling about with the thoughtless. Being a member of a Temperance Society saved him from many a snare, and prevented him from falling into those temptations that are the ruin of myriads of our young men. Whatever may be said about our Temperance Societies and Bands of Hope, there is no doubt that they have saved and are saving thousands from perdition. Had Peter lived one Sunday longer, he would have had a token of the respect in which he was held by being presented with a Bible, and though the gift might not have been very costly to the giver, yet the priceless Word of God will ever be among the most precious of all precious treasures, for he that delighteth and meditates on that Word, whatsoever he does shall prosper.

I often think it possible to form a tolerably correct opinion of the character of the occu-

pants of either cottage or mansion, from the books on the shelves, pictures on the wall, or ornaments on the mantel-piece; the law of association holds good in this respect as well as others; the animate selecting its counterpart from the inanimate, the one reflecting the other. Books, pictures, ornaments, are teachers and companions, and if they be our own selection, what they are, we are. We should think it strange if we found in the house of a member of the Peace Society, the portrait of a pugilist or the bust of a warrior; or the walls of a man of the turf hung with Methodist preachers; or the study of a minister decorated with favourite racehorses or the steeplechase. The truth of these observations I once had strongly corroborated on a visit to the old seamen in Greenwich Hospital; one of the venerable marines offering to be my guide through this former residence of kings. We commenced at the range of dormiteries. On entering the first, in addition to what there was provided for every room, I found a chip of the Royal

George, several rather obscene ballads, and pictures of three women of doubtful character, dressed in dashing colours; one book only, a tattered volume of old Dibdin.

"This cabin belongs to an old obscene tar, who cares more for his grog and a long yarn than for his soul," I observed.

"Do you know him?" he asked.

"No, I judge from those pictures and songs on the wall," I replied.

"You judge rightly too, for we have a deal of trouble with him, he is a wicked old man; but come into the next room, and tell me what you think of the tenant."

On entering I at once saw it was inhabited by a very different person to the last. His little bookshelf contained Booth's Reign of Grace, Doddridge's Works, Pilgrim's Progress, two Bibles (one a present), and two Hymn Books; on the walls the Spiritual Railway, Daily Readings, and a few exquisite Scripture illustrations.

"A good man lives here I will warrant," I observed.

"Yes, sir; we call him the good Samaritan; he reads and prays with most that are sick, and we all like old Ben. I rather think you can tell fortunes, sir, and I shall not take you into my room."

I thought of Greenwich and the law of association as I sat in the thatched cottage at Moss Side. The top of the low wall that supported the end of the rafters and the thatched roof was the principal shelf; in betwixt the narrow space lay a few books and tracts, all moral or religious, and the Book of books occupied a conspicuous place; the neat framed funeral cards of father and brother hung together.

Before leaving the cottage, we commended the mother and children to Him who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, feeling how difficult it must be for them to adopt the first line of the verse on Peter's memoriam. It requires strong faith under such circumstances to believe that the providence of God is equal, and that a bitter share has not fallen to their lot; but after all

God nothing does or suffers to be done, but what we Should do, if we all things knew as well as He.

While walking among the cottages and sand-hills, looking towards the sea, a tall upright post stood distinctly out in the horizon; this, I was told, was the Fog-bell, recently erected by subscription, to be rung in mists and fogs to guide the shrimpers in the safe direction, thereby preventing a recurrence of such a sad event as the one that had just transpired. Wishing to see this signal for safety, we went to the coast, and found it a strong beam, near the top the deep-toned bell, and around the base a wooden cabin to shelter the ringer from the storms and cold. The man now in charge of the bell is an aged fisherman, called Tom Wright, or old Tom, whom the shrimpers allow four shillings per week to be ready in the hour of need. Old Tom, the bell-toller, pointed out in the distance the memorable banks that had been so fatal to his friends on the morning when the flowing tide shut them in so far from shore, making special

mention of one place he called Tomlinson's Bank. He was glad the bell had been provided, for though the Fog-horn had often signalled the shrimpers, the bell would be better heard. The man, like all we had seen in the neighbourhood, seemed to feel for the fate of the worthy sufferers, and those they had left behind, hoping there never would again be such a funeral at Marsh Side while he lived, or the world stood.

It appeared that the scene he witnessed on the day the seven men were interred, had left a strong impression on the mind of Old Tom, as no doubt it did on many. It will long be an epoch amongst the inhabitants of North Meols. Thousands from Southport and the surrounding district, some in carriages, some on horseback, and some on foot, had travelled from a distance to be present. The seven biers, with their precious burdens covered with white cloths, stood ready, a hymn amidst sobs and wailing was sung, and then the melancholy procession moved on, both sides of the road were lined with

spectators, with heads uncovered, many of them weeping that did not often weep; each coffin was followed by the relatives and friends of the dead one, for all of them were much respected. A few members of the Temperance Society, and several school-fellows of Peter, walked before him; his mother, three sisters, and six young brothers following after. On entering the parish church, the sublime service for the dead, so impressive and descriptive of man's mortal and immortal state, was read amidst the sobs and tears of the vast assembly,—a service opening out in language of unequalled grandeur visions of the unseen world, the voice from heaven proclaiming the ineffable glory, and unspeakable felicity awaiting them that die in the Lord. O how beautiful would Peter's affection to his widowed mother, his care and kindness to his sisters and brothers, look in that solemn hour! It is the hour when the deeds of the dead can not be hid, when heaven's messenger reads over the palls of the departed heaven's inexorable decrees,

then the listening mourners can the best feel the true value of things eternal, and the warning, "Be ye also ready," is seen to be a warning given by the best of friends.

I trust that when the graves which that day closed over the mortal remains of the seven fishermen, are again opened by the voice of Him that will raise us all, they may have a glorious resurrection.

And that those who are alive, and their children's children, who have to earn their bread amidst the dangers of the deep, may be guided through clouds, mists, and shoals, to their families and homes in safety, by the pealing notes of the new FOG BELL.

THE

GOLDEN WEDDING.

Though time has thinned thy once full hair,
And made thy polished brow less fair;
Still art thou dear—yes, dearer now,
Then when I first beheld that brow.

WHEN a couple have been married for twenty-five years, the Germans celebrate the event by what they call a *silver* wedding—alluding to the silvery appearance of the half-ripened grain; but when fifty years of wedded life have elapsed, the festivity is termed a *golden* wedding, from the golden hue of the fully ripened harvest, ready to be gathered in. To complete the figure, we may speak of the outset of married life, among the poor, as the *copper* wedding, as

they have too often little more than copper to begin the world with.

To see a virtuous young couple, full of life and hope, standing at the marriage altar, and, before heaven and earth, making the solemn vow that, for weal or woe, they take each other till death shall them part;—to see them, hand in hand, earnestly, patiently, and successfully fighting the battle of life, step by step reaching the summit, and then calmly descending towards the vale, still loving and faithful to each other, until, with grey hairs, they each sit down in their old arm-chairs, silently waiting for the last foe, —is one of those beautiful sights sometimes seen in the cottage homes of England.

Let it not be supposed that the snows of many winters extinguish the fires of love, or that the venerable in years decay in their true affections. The romance may be less with them than in the young, but their mutual regard flows in deeper depths. Love is never old,—love is never grey,—love is never wrinkled,—love is eternally young.

Aged, loving couples, like James and Peggy, the subjects of this narrative, can call together sons and daughters, and grandchildren, to share their joys in celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of their marriage, —their GOLDEN WEDDING DAY.

Most people in this neighbourhood have heard of Turton, and Turton fair, especially those who have made sorry bargains there; for at this fair many an old, broken-winded, spavined horse has been sold for a good sound five-year old. Somehow, horses at fairs are seldom over five, or at the most seven years of age. But worse bargains than buying bad horses have been made at Turton fair, as many an unhappy couple can testify. To find a good husband or a good wife at a fair is very improbable, for persons likely to make good husbands or good wives are not often seen at such places.

But there is a fine old church at Turton, and immediately behind the old church is a deep valley. On crossing the brook, and ascending from the vale to Edgeworth, there

are many scattered hamlets and villages. One Sunday morning, in February, 1816, a young man, called James, and a young woman, called Peggy, accompanied by a few country friends, set out from one of the villages in Edgeworth to the old church in Bolton, to make the solemn vow, and tremblingly give and receive that ring of rings.

At the time of this marriage, neither James nor Peggy had joined any Christian church. James, at the request of good old Mr. Barlow, the father of the present Mayor of Bolton, did once attend a religious meeting, and wished to become a Christian, but being persuaded to join a public house dinner, he got drunk, and was ashamed to go to the meeting after. Religion at that time, was scoffed at in Turton and Edgeworth. The "reign of reason" in France had sent its moral pestilence to many parts of England, and the cotton weavers of Edgeworth sang the sceptic's song. In one workshop, out of eighteen men, fifteen could laugh at the Bible. Three of these com-

mitted self-murder, several had to leave the country, and the rest were clothed in rags. Infidelity, in theory or practice, is bad for trade; it seldom puts a good coat on a man's back.

James was not an unbeliever, but he sometimes got drunk. One evening he was late at the public house, and his young wife was in great trouble. She feared he had got drowned or killed, and her fears became so strong that she set out in the dark to seek for him. She would have given all the world to know he was alive and safe. At last she heard his voice, and then felt she would like to whip him. On entering the house, she did not scold or upbraid him, but sat down and wept. He saw her deep sorrow, and resolved he would never again disgrace himself and give pain to his wife by getting drunk. He has kept this resolution to this hour, and this was, to the young couple, the beginning of better days.

One Sunday evening, two good men came to talk with James about a meeting he had

that day attended at Haslingden. These two men were something like the two disciples that walked with Christ to Emmaus,—their hearts burned within them with love to God and love to man. Before leaving James, they requested permission to pray; both engaged in devotion with great earnestness, and one of them urged James to pray also. What James said he could never tell; he felt as if the house floor was sinking, and all were going down together. But the Holy Spirit was present, and James and Peggy saw their lost condition,—saw their need of a Saviour, and saw that if Christ did not save them, they must perish.

About this time a strange and mysterious influence came over many of the inhabitants of Edgeworth and Turton. Careless, worldly people, and Sabbath-breakers began to attend places of worship. Cold professors of religion began to be in earnest. Calvinists, Churchmen, and Wesleyans, who for many years had held keen controversies about names and creeds, and shown how little

religion they had by their hot tempers and unchristian language, and their carnality of mind, by their contentions about being followers of men,—began to look through men to Christ. The nearer they got to Christ, the nearer they got to each other, and they soon found that one moment's prayer was worth far more than one hour's controversy. Meetings for prayer multiplied on every hand, and men and women began to ask what they must do to be saved.

James and Peggy were amongst the inquirers, and so deep were the convictions of James, that he despaired of salvation; and so powerful were the Spirit's workings on his heart, that he thought he would disgrace any place of worship he should enter. Peggy, too was sorrowing for sin; but God knew it all. It was His blessed work, and He never wounds but to heal. Mercy and pardon were at hand, and when mercy and pardon came, they rejoiced with an unspeakable joy.

That night on which the two men called

was the first time they had ever knelt down together at the fire-side, or that either of them had lifted up the voice in audible prayer. But it was not the last. Both at once agreed that they would daily read the Bible and have family prayer, taking the duty in turn. But a slight difficulty arose at the outset. Several neighbours were in the habit of coming to sit with James and Peggy, after the day's work was done, and how must they do with them? It was settled that a chapter in the Bible should be read, if they remained at the reading, they would very likely remain at prayer. Two remained and two went out. It is forty-nine years since the now happy couple agreed daily to read God's holy word and kneel together in prayer to ask His guidance and blessing in all their undertakings, and His preserving care over them and their children. Nor has this contract been broken by them for a single day during these forty-nine years.

I first became acquainted with this

worthy couple about the time of their silver wedding, or when they had been married twenty-five years. The inventions of Watt, Arkwright, and Crompton had completely revolutionised the industrial operations in the cotton trade. Large mills began to spring up in many parts of Lancashire, and the steam-loom and spinning-jenny superseded the hand-loom and bobbin-wheel. The weavers had to sell their looms for fence-wood or fire-wood, break up their rural loom-sheds, and follow the work into the factories, and learn to labour by steam-power. One of these large mills was built by Mr. Fenton, of Bamford Hall, in the valley near Hooley Bridge. To this place James and Peggy came, with their young family, and so became my neighbours. They lived in one of a long row of neat cottages, overlooking the valley in which flowed the river Roach, and for order, comfort, and neatness, few cottages could be found to surpass it.

My business often led me by the door of this cottage, and this began our acquaintance.

From the first I was struck with the harmony and happiness of the family,—no noise, no hurry, no bustle, but order and tranquillity. When for the day the huge steam-engine withdrew his mighty power, and the hum of wheels, and the rattle of the loom had ceased, and James, with those of his family able to work, returned to their home, they always found a welcome from the good wife and mother.

> Loving always, loving ever,
> Singing, laughing, sullen never;
> Clean, industrious, sober, steady,
> To please her husband ever ready.

And James was one of those wise men that took his smiles home, and that during the whole course of his married life never gave up courting. Farewell to all domestic happiness and wedded felicity when married people give up courting. No wise husband and wife ever will; they will court on to the end of life's journey.

James had a smile for his own wife, and a kind word for his children. He knew that

smiles were most valuable at his own fireside. Some men have a smile for anybody's wife but their own and a cheerful word for anybody's child but their own, and can whistle and sing anywhere but at their own homes. In the field, the mill, the warehouse or the workshop, where none care a fig for them, they dare not put on their mighty airs and sulky looks, or use insulting words; but in their own homes they are a dread and terror. The sound of their feet is the signal for fear and trembling to both wife and children. No smile for them,—no cheery, kind word for them; and woe to the poor wife if anybody has offended this mighty lord, for she will have to be the scape-goat for everybody's sin. Oh, how many wives there are who would give the cap off their head for the husband's smile,—who would kneel at his feet for a kind look or a kind word. All such men are miserable tyrants and cowards; for all tyrants are cowards, whether they sit on thrones or three-legged stools.

But I have already told the secret of James and Peggy's domestic felicity and family joys. The daily reading of the scriptures and prayer,—that most impressive of all worship,—their regular attendance at the house of God, and social means of grace, produced in the family, and will produce in any family, fruits of peace, for religion's ways are all ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are paths of peace. Home religion is the sweetest religion, and if there be no piety at home, there will not be much anywhere. The appearance of religion only at meetings, or on Sunday, proves that it is *only* an appearance.

In this village home we have a pleasing illustration of "love in a cottage." What the world calls riches are not necessary to make people truly happy. Only heaven-born riches,—the pearl of great price,—can do this. The humbler walks of life are not, as a consequence, the least comfortable. Honest toil, with love to God, and mutual affection,

bring many joys, for we can live without fortune, but not without love.

James and Peggy had eight living children, four sons and four daughters, and their greatest anxiety was to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. All of them, from their very infancy, were taught the way to the house of God, for the Sabbath was to them a delight, and the Sunday-school and the house of prayer a blessing. No harshness or severity was used to induce them to attend the sanctuary,—the power of kindness and love made "their cheerful feet in swift obedience move." One little fellow, Samuel, one fine Sunday evening, instead of going to chapel, ran into Simpson clough wood with some boys, but so distressed was the mother about his absence, that she could not go herself without him. After searching for some time, she found him in the wood, and the sight of his mother, with sad countenance, made Samuel hold down his head. He knew that he had grieved his parents, and that he had done wrong. Mother and

son returned from the wood in silence, he walking on a little before. On reaching home, he was requested to go up stairs, the mother followed, and gently and tenderly showed him the consequences of not keeping the Sabbath holy; and when she saw he was penitent, she took a small piece of writing paper, wrote down his confession of having done wrong, and his promise never to offend again. He then, as well as he could, signed his name to the paper. They then knelt down, and the mother prayed that God would forgive her child, and save him from bad companions, and from turning his back on the house of prayer. For years Samuel kept that paper in his hymn-book, to strengthen his resolution to be a good lad.

But it was not the children alone that profited by the precept and example of this worthy pair. The poor, the sick, and the dying often found them as angels of mercy. The erring one found sympathy, the doubting one encouragement, and the young believer in Christ was strengthened with wise

advice. The minister of the gospel had in them charitable hearers, and affectionate counsellors, and few entered their cottage that would be allowed to leave without a word about spiritual things. Many times, when I have called, after the first expression of welcome, Peggy would say,—

"Well, I suppose you are like Gideon's host,—faint, yet pursuing; passing through things temporal so as not to loose sight of things eternal. Let us talk a little about spiritual things first, for they ought to be first, and then we will talk about business and trade after."

I have often sat at their humble fireside, exchanging and comparing religious experience with James and Peggy, and have come away a better and more thoughtful man, and I believe that hundreds have done the same.

One of their family trials—for they were not without these—was when they discovered that their child George was deaf and dumb. For a time this was a great trouble,

and the parents felt the full meaning of the words,—

"Oh! if he could but hear
For one short hour, till I his tongue could teach
To call me mother, in that broken speech
That thrills the mother's ear;
But no, those sealed lips will ne'er be stirred
To the deep music of that lovely word."

But if George could not hear or speak, he could sometimes show a little temper. When he was about five years old, he one day was very impatient under a little correction from his father, and when the father had left the house, the little dumb creature stamped his feet, clenched his tiny fists and looked very indignant. The mother shook her head at the child to show him she approved of what his father done. This enraged him more, and he ran up the stairs, sat down on one of the steps and began to stamp his feet with all his might. The mother was grieved by this act of insubordination, and shed tears of pity for her afflicted child. George came down

stairs, and, seeing her sorrow, made signs to know why she wept. She took him on her knee and opened the Bible,—for she knew that the child somehow understood that he was to be good when the Bible was opened, —when he bowed his head in submission, and seldom rebelled again. George is now a fine and intelligent man, thirty years of age, still residing with his parents, able to earn a good livelihood, and gives me a yearly subscription to the Chapel for the Destitute. If he should leave home for a single day, to go as far as Manchester or Bolton, he signals for either his father or mother to kneel down and pray that God will be with him, and protect him on his journey; for the deaf and dumb son thinks much of the prayers of his pious parents.

The 18th of February, 1866, was the day on which James and Peggy had been married fifty years. The copper and silver wedding days had long been past, and now came the time for the GOLDEN WEDDING.

They called their sons and daughters and their grandchildren together: some were gone to heaven, but of the three generations, seventeen were present. It was a meeting of kindred spirits; it was once again, to those that resided at a distance, a coming home to the place around which pleasing memories were enshrined. Oh, how much homes differ! Some homes are the nurseries of our affections, and some are their grave. All the guests at this golden wedding were happy; thoughts about departed ones they all had, but still it was a day of rejoicing. The frugal but full board was spread, and the blessing of Him that sent the blessing was implored. Incidents and events of past days constituted the principal subjects of conversation, and, at the request of affectionate children, the aged, gray-headed father and grandfather made a speech. It would be a blessing if every old man could say what old James Horrocks said on the day of his golden wedding.

The moment he rose, every eye was fixed

upon him, and every heart throbbed with emotion. He stood a short time in silence, with tears streaming down his cheeks, which brought tears from his excited audience. With a strong effort he recovered himself, and gave, in substance, the following speech:—

"My dear children, I am glad to see you here on the fiftieth wedding day of your father and mother. I feel I cannot express my thankfulness to God for His goodness and mercies to your mother and me, ever since we were married. We are both monuments of His mercies, and subjects of His saving grace. He has given us food and raiment, a house in which to dwell, health, strength, and reason, and more blessings of every sort than I can count. But the greatest blessing has been a knowledge of sins forgiven, and peace with God through Christ.

"Your mother has been a good wife to me, and we have borne with each other, and, I think, love one another better to-day than

we ever did in our lives, for we never gave up courting. I have always thought well of my wife. I promised when I had her, to keep to her only; and I can truly say, that I have given no other woman a kiss these fifty years; for I have been determined to think better of her than of anybody else. We know what struggles are, for I have never had more than eighteen shillings a-week, except sometimes when mowing, and you have all had to be brought up; yet we always paid our rent on the day it was due, and every rate the first time they called for it; and I never was dunned or asked for money owing in my life. I am not boasting, for I do not want to boast, for it is all of God's goodness and mercy. Oh, what goodness! what goodness!"

Here the old man fairly broke down; his heart became so full when telling of God's goodness that he could not speak, and he sat down amidst a shower of tears from all present.

After James had finished his short but

remarkable speech, one of his sons rose and read the following lines composed for the occasion :—

"We meet to celebrate a day
For which we have not ceased to pray;
And, oh, how thankful we should be
Our honoured parents thus to see.

"Through fifty years of wedded life
They've safely passed, and free from strife;
Years sweetened by conjugal love,
And crowned with blessings from above."

Other speeches were made, besides a short one from Peggy, all breathing gratitude and thankfulness. Before parting they sang a hymn, and then all knelt down; several prayed that the Holy Spirit would still guide and comfort their aged parents; and the aged parents prayed that all their children and grandchildren might feel and know that Christ was their Saviour, and all meet at last where families never break up, not one be then missing, and all be forever with the Lord.

James is now seventy-nine years of age,

and Peggy seventy-two, and both continue in moderate health. They are able to do some useful work, especially in visiting the sick and poor; and to them the Sabbath day, the church, the social means of grace, and the family altar are more than ever precious. They can now sweetly testify—

> That down to old age God's people still prove
> His sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;
> And when hoary hairs their temples adorn,
> Like lambs in His bosom they still shall be borne.

WILLIAM, THE TUTOR.

AMONGST the many sad and painful scenes to be found in our large towns and cities, there are few more impressive and instructive than the night-houses. Here, especially in the winter months, may be seen crowds of squalid-looking men, utterly penniless, who are glad to avail themselves of a night's shelter and a crust of bread. And yet, lonely and destitute as they appear, many of them could relate a history as full of interest as of misfortune or error. Being acquainted with the governor of one of these homes of the wanderer, I have often spent a considerable portion of the night amongst his casual visitors, to many of whom I am no stranger.

One evening, after a long and interesting conversation with the inmates for that night, the time arrived when, according to rule, all must take their respective sleeping places. The governor, standing at one end of the long room, clapped his hands, and instantly every eye was fixed upon him. When all was silent, he with a loud voice called out,—"Turn in!" and immediately fifty-nine men lay down on the boards, with a slightly raised plank for their pillow, and a rug for their covering. Never did I see so many men get so quickly into bed. They crouched down on the hard floor, without taking off one particle of dress, and in a moment all was quiet. The governor turned down the gas, until nothing but a glimmer remained; then we slowly and softly walked betwixt the rows of silent shadows, for the dim light made every object indistinct, and gave to the whole a gloomy and depressing effect.

In these homes, on the same night, and in those miserable beds, often lie side by side almost every variety of character;—the

honest labourer, seeking employment, the pickpocket, the weeping prodigal, the hardened tramp, the sickly fusee-seller, the red-nosed coachman, the used-up gambler, the incorrigible mendicant, the ignorant cadger, the intellectual scholar, &c., and all, or nearly all, are old or young drunkards. One of the last mentioned class is the principal subject of the following sketch. His name is William.

Every week, and almost every day, makes me acquainted with something new that is painful to know. Either at the Chapel for the Destitute, in the streets, or at my own house, hundreds of persons find me out, most of whom are seeking for sympathy and assistance, and present every conceivable state of wretchedness. Many are strangers, of whom I know and can learn nothing; others reside in neighbouring or distant towns, and give references; and of some we know too much. But amongst them are frequently found poor, honest, deserving

people, to whom it is a pleasure to render what help we can.

The day on which William sought me out was a day to make beggars look beggars indeed. Low, heavy clouds, fog, and drizzling rain, had made his old straw hat, thin blouse, and tattered nether garments, look a miserable covering for any human being. Not knowing the way to the back door, he opened the small iron gate leading to the front; but seeing one of my fellow-labourers, Mr. Barraclough, through the window, he stood still in the walk. On my opening the door, he drew a few steps nearer, and informed me he was in great need. His address was polished and respectful. If not a gentleman in appearance, he was in deportment and manners. He seemed very anxious that I should not consider him an impostor, and assured me he was really starving, without any present means of earning his bread.

"What is your trade, my man?" I asked.

"Well, sir, I have no trade; I am a classical scholar, and was last a tutor in the family of a Member of Parliament." While speaking, he gave me a letter bearing the member's name.

After reading the note, I handed it back, and, looking him in the face, said,—

"Has drink done this?"

He held down his head, and with a trembling hand put back the letter into a soiled, greasy envelope, saying,—"Yes, it is drink."

Having some confidence that he was speaking the truth, yet knowing by experience how clever at deception many of my new friends are, I gave him a few sheets of writing paper, a couple of steel pens, and sixpence, telling him that he might get a little food and a fire-side in some lodging-house, and write me a sketch of his life, or anything he liked,—that I should be at home about seven in the evening, and that he might call again.

I did this more to give him a dinner and

a shelter, than from any expectation of seeing him again; but, about the time appointed, my niece informed me that a poor man stood at the yard door, wanting to speak to me. On going, I found it was William. He had brought his written paper, which I shall now give, without the slightest alteration:—

"I am the son of highly respectable parents. My father was possessed of very considerable wealth, but, by some unfortunate speculations in Cornish mines, and losses sustained through his connection with a joint stock bank, before the days of 'Limited Liability,' he became much reduced in circumstances. He was, however, able to bring up his children well, and gave me the best education which our neighbourhood could supply. I was the eldest of the family, and, having shown from an early age a marked disposition towards books and study, unusual pains were taken to encourage my inclinations; so that, before I was twelve years of age, I was master of several

Greek and Latin authors, in addition to a good knowledge of the different branches of English commonly taught in schools.

"My habits and character were quiet and retiring, and when I arrived at the years of reflection, and began to think of my future course in life, I resolved, if possible, to enter the Church as the sphere most suited to my temper and abilities.

"As my father's limited means were quite inadequate to furnish the expenses of a college education, I was very glad to accept the situation of tutor in a school, where the salary, though small, was progressive, and gave me hopes of some time or other attaining my object. I remained at this school for some time, discharging my duties to the satisfaction of the Principal, who gave me a first-class testimonial on my leaving to take a resident tuition in a gentleman's family. I lived with this family for six years, and from the salary which I received was enabled to keep terms in Trinity College (where I gained second

place at entrance, and classical honours subsequently), as well as to give some pecuniary assistance to my father and mother.

"Up to this time everything went well with me. I occupied a respectable position, bore an irreproachable character, and had every prospect of a happy future. But, alas! to use the words of Tennyson,—

'No one can be more wise than Destiny;'

and the events of a very short time indeed sufficed to overturn the fabric of a whole life-time, and to precipitate me into an abyss of wretchedness.

"I had for some years been deeply attached to a young lady, and, with every reason to believe that my affection was reciprocated, had indulged in all the day-dreams that arise from the most powerful passion of the human soul. She was the daughter of a medical doctor who resided in our neighbourhood, and as our two fami-

lies were on very intimate terms, our affection, which I believe was then sincere on both sides, had full scope for development. It is needless for me to attempt to describe the rise, progress, and force of my attachment for her,—it would only be 'the old story over again,' of what most men have felt at some period or other of their lives. It will be enough for me to say that all my hopes, plans, and projects had reference to her.

'She was my life,
The ocean to the river of my thoughts
That terminated all.'

"After some years thus happily spent, at length, as if from mere caprice, she changed, and married a young man of only a few months' acquaintance. I had never given her cause to alter in her faith to me, and she herself would assign no reason. Then came down days of gloom and misery upon me. I lost all interest in life, and grew weary of the sun,—nothing could console or calm my mind. The 'heavens seemed as

brass, and the earth as iron,' and my spirits drooped and sank so that I could hardly go through my daily duties.

"Then I flew for refuge to the fool's antidote for a dejected and prostrate mind, and in the deceitful stimulus of strong drink obtained some nerve and heart for my work. But it mastered me before long, and, as a 'mocker,' most truly verified the words of Solomon. I was obliged to resign my situation, which I had held so long with credit and reputation; and the thought of this preyed deeply on my mind, and carried me still further into the mad vortex. The coldness and reproaches of friends only added fuel to the flame, and I became desperate.

"In this state of mind I resolved to come to this country, and try to obtain some employment in which, now 'sadder and wiser,' I might redeem my character. But after spending some weeks in fruitless efforts, and having been compelled to part with my clothes and books, as a last resource I sought employment in the fields. I have

been so engaged for the last two months, and by the labour of my hands have avoided starvation. Now, even that means of support seems cut off, since the harvest ended, and I know not whither to turn. I have suffered much of late both in mind and body, but I believe that what I have gone through has taught me a salutary and lasting lesson, should I ever again have an opportunity of redeeming the past.

"I have a very strong personal experience of the almost infinite evils of strong drink. I have seen and known how it affords a specious but most fallacious support in sorrow, adding remorse to regret,—how it renders callous and insensible every better feeling and sentiment of the heart, and blights and withers all that come beneath its influence. I believe the best man on earth would speedily degenerate if once he became entangled in its fatal meshes.

"As for myself, I am now a wreck and ruin of what I have been. I have alienated

my friends, lost opportunities, deprived myself of even the means of supporting life, and stand at this moment absolutely alone in the world. The 'last scene of all' only is wanting, that calamity may culminate and conclude. And yet I believe I should retrieve myself, should Providence kindly grant me an opportunity.

"I have abandoned the habits which destroyed me, and, with God's help, shall never resume them. I have bought experience too dearly ever to tamper with the enemy again,—which I believe to be the most insidious foe man has to deal with. Few persons, I am convinced, *deliberately* become drunkards; the vice mostly assumes an attractive and even innocent aspect in its first approaches, and preserves this appearance up to a certain point, at which the victim becomes subject to a physiological change which necessitates a constant supply of stimulant. If he does not *then*, at once, discontinue the habit, he sinks with a wonderful rapidity into the condition of the

sot, reckless of himself and everything else, but drink.

"It is at this point that the drunkard is *made*. The great obstacle to his safety is the want of moral courage to drop the habit then, at once and altogether.

'*Facilis descensus Averni*, . . .
Sed revocare gradum, superasque evadere ad auras,
Hoc opus, hic labor est.'

'The descent to Avernus is easy, . . .
But to retract one's steps, and get away again to the upper world,
This is a difficulty—this is a labour.'

"I shall only add, that all that has occurred to me through my folly seems, as I look back upon it, like a dream. There appears such an utter absence of reason, motive, and coherency, that I sometimes ask myself if I am really the same person, or if such things have in truth happened. That I have been now nearly a week almost without bread, or any means or prospect of

earning it, sufficiently answers me that it is *too true.*"

Yes, William, it is too true; and it is true of thousands who are found in our night-houses, or wandering in our towns and highways, begging at our doors, or lodged in our prisons. If there were no sorrows in this world but those that are unavoidable, the loss of Paradise would not have been so bitterly felt. Self-made troubles constitute by far the greatest part of the suffering we have to endure in this life. Whatever mystery there may be about the origin of evil, there is none about its perpetuation. Physical and moral laws deliberately outraged bring their inevitable consequences. Of this truth we have no stronger illustration than the drunkard. Here is a young man who, as we have since learned, can speak, write, and teach the English, French, Greek, Latin, and Italian languages, and knows much of the Spanish, who, for drink, has sold his books and clothes, lost his reputa-

tion, his high and honourable position, left his parents in sorrow, and stands at my door in rags, and, to use his own words, "the last scene of all is only wanting that calamity may culminate and conclude;" which means suicide and death, by the knife, the rope, or the river.

But there are other modes of committing suicide besides the knife, the rope, or the river. Myriads of fine young men, promising as fair for a long and honourable life as any now living, are laid in premature graves, self-murderers every one of them, self-slain by strong drink. And every grade of society furnishes its victims: even the highest and most sacred office under heaven does not escape.

Since commencing this sketch, I was for a short time the guest of a gentleman farmer in Lincolnshire. Riding in his carriage through those sweet agricultural scenes, betwixt Normanby and Brigg, he pointed with his whip to a good house, commanding a pleasant view of the country, and said,—

"Do you see that house with the white blinds down?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Well, sir, that is the minister's house; he died yesterday. He was a fine young man, of excellent disposition, a good scholar, with bright prospects; but he began to drink, and on Sunday week was drunk in the pulpit. He has died at thirty of *delirium tremens*,—died raving mad,—poor fellow!"

Yes,—poor fellow! If any one had told this young minister when twenty years of age that he would die a drunkard's death at thirty, he would have been sorely grieved. But the use of drink brings its own consequences: it ever did, and ever will.

The reading of William's paper convinced me that he was a highly-cultivated and intellectual man, and that he might be possibly restored to society and retrieve his lost position; and, with this object in view, I determined to do all for him I could. I gave him a shilling and a pair of trousers,

once belonging to a dear friend, now in heaven, and told him to call again. On handing to William the trousers, I saw the tears start to his eyes. He eagerly, yet blushingly, folded them under his thin blouse, and, a few minutes after, I met him in the street, looking much better and happier. The Sunday following he ventured to appear at the Chapel for the Destitute. William had given me the address of the gentleman in whose family he had been tutor. My fellow-labourer, Mr. Calman, immediately wrote off, and very soon I received the following answer:—

"DEAR SIR,—I regret much to hear that William is in distress. I have a very high opinion of his talents and acquirements, as well as his powers of teaching. I had every reason to be fully satisfied with him, until the morning when he left my house. His sudden departure gave me great concern, as well on account of my boys as for himself. I shall be happy to learn that he is improving, and in some position suited to his high talents and intellectual acquirements.

"Very truly yours,

"_____."

This letter strengthened my conviction that, though William was a drunkard, he was not a liar, and that he was truly repenting his past folly,—for he had bitterly felt its consequences. He had been a week almost without food, had been forced to herd with the lowest characters in low lodging-houses, and when without a penny, had to ask permission to sleep on boards in the night asylum, or creep under the sheaves of corn in the open field. His reflections during one of these solitary nights, when lodging on the cold, damp ground, I will now give in his own flowing language:—

"My present wretched condition, by association of ideas, brought up in strong contrast days of happiness, of which the memory alone was all that now remained. It was not so very long since, at this very season of the year, I was enjoying myself in a splendid filbert plantation, and among peach-trees,—sitting daily at table with persons of high station, and spending evenings of agreeable and improving intercourse,

on equal terms with all who assembled there; and *now*, 'the heavy change!' I was lying in the field of a stranger, in a strange land, in the dead of the night, houseless and homeless, hungry and cold, hundreds of miles from a single human being to whom my life or death would give a moment's concern. And for what had I come to this? For a miserable weakness, for a short-lived exemption from the pangs of a fruitless regret, for a pleasant but delusive draught of a Lethe, which, in drowning the recollection of some sorrows, made me also forget my duty towards my God. True, I had often endeavoured to fortify my breast with the maxims of philosophy, and often braced up all the manhood I possessed to quench the fire that was consuming me; but I had neglected to appeal for help to Heaven, as if mortal woe, from any cause whatever, were unworthy of the ear of the Almighty; and the result was—failure and ruin. With a deeper appreciation of their

force and truth than I had ever known before, I thought of Rousseau's words: '*L'oubli de la religion conduit a l'oubli de tous les devoirs de l'homme.*' (The forgetting of religion leads to the forgetting of all the duties of man.) But what availed the knowledge of this now? Had I thought seriously and earnestly on this subject months ago, what might I not have escaped! And the spectre of a gloomy proverb arose, and sternly reminded me that 'Repentance comes too late when all is spent:' and had I indeed spent ALL. Money, position, friends, character—all were gone. There was hardly on this night in all England a poorer wretch than myself. I tried to remember some of my thoughts and feelings during the feverish dream in which my indulgence in drink had plunged me, but I could retrace nothing rational, nothing satisfactory, nothing but 'combinations of disjointed things.' There had been no study, no improvement, no looking forward to something better, no

settled plan of action, or object in life. I had been retrograding; not merely standing still, but sinking lower and lower, and, worst sign of all, I did not feel that I was doing so. I was in a state of moral and physical stupefaction. I hoped for nothing, I feared nothing, and I cared for nothing. Oh drink, drink! what an infatuation attends it! In spite of warnings, loving or dreadful, in spite of all conviction and all resolutions, still it attracts, ensnares, and destroys its scarcely unwilling victims. I am so persuaded, from experience, of its almost supernatural powers of fascination, that I believe if over every ale-house door, instead of a sign, there were placed the plain English of the beginning of the inscription over Dante's 'Porta dell' Inferno:'

'Per me si va nella citta dolente,
Per me si va tralla perduta gente;'

'Through me men go into the *city of woes*,
Through me men go amongst those who are lost;'

—it would not deter one drunkard from entering it."

William had informed me that his parents were still alive, and, knowing the unspeakable anguish that parents feel for a lost child, I urged him to write home at once, and they would then know he was still alive. William replied, that he had daily thought of doing so, but feared that for them to know the truth would be more distressing than the suspense; but he complied with my request. His mother immediately sent a reply, from which the following is an extract. The whole letter is full of kindness and a mother's love:

"MY DEAREST WILLY,—I was exceedingly glad to hear from you to-day, for I had given up all hopes of ever seeing you again alive. Do let me entreat you, my dear Willy, to become an altered man. Do not touch strong drink in any shape; you know the consequences. Pray constantly and fervently to God to keep you from temptation, and to guide you in all your ways; be assured He will be your best Friend. May His all-seeing eye watch over you, my dear child.

"Your ever affectionate Mother."

I have frequent opportunities of seeing William. He is earning a few shillings weekly in a humble but honest way; and if he takes his mother's advice, he may yet regain his high and honourable position of TUTOR.

FATHERS:

"A word—a look—has crushed to earth
Many a budding flower,
Which, had a smile but owned its birth,
Had blessed life's darkest hour."

A LITTLE boy, about five years of age, said to a lady-friend of his mother,—

"If my mother was to die, and be buried, and go to heaven, would you be my father's wife, and my new mother?"

The lady, opening her eyes wide and holding up her hands in astonishment, burst out laughing, and replied,—

"No, my little fellow, I think I would not."

The child was silent a few minutes, then earnestly looking her in the face, rejoined,—

"Then I know what for. Father is such a cranky fellow, he makes me and all my brothers and sisters miserable; and he would make you miserable too, would he not?"

Another little fellow, returning from school, being asked by his companion what he liked the best in the whole world, replied,—

"To hear my father scraping his shoes at the door."

"Why, how is it that you like that the best?" asked his youthful school-fellow in surprise.

"Because he makes us all as happy as crickets when he comes home; me, and Kate, and every one of us, and that is first-rate."

These two children unconsciously revealed fireside secrets of great importance; and they also explained one cause of the misery or joy of thousands of families—a cause producing the most painful or pleasing results—and I hope one or two illus-

trations may be productive of good to many, but especially to fathers.

Two middle-aged men quietly walking through the fields one Sunday evening, amongst other subjects of conversation, began to talk about domestic matters. One of them said,—

"I sometimes think that I shall lose all my natural affection for my children, especially my sons. I never think of them without pain of mind, and I am more or less grieved with them every day. The oldest left home last week because I reproved him for a fault, and I expect soon to hear of him wearing a red jacket, or something worse."

"I am sorry to hear that David has left home," observed his companion; "what does his mother say about it?"

"Well, she does not say much, but I see she feels it greatly. She eats little and sleeps less; but I am not going to send for him back. The door is open, if he thinks proper to return."

I was told of this conversation, no doubt for the purpose of inducing me to do what I could to get David home again, for his mother's sake. I scarcely knew how to go about the affair; but a circumstance transpired which gave me the opportunity of speaking to him on the subject.

I had been some miles into the country, and was returning home late in the evening, when I was joined on the road by David, who had been to see a few of his old neighbours. It was a cold winter evening, and there was an east wind, strong and piercing, that gathered up the soft snow in whirling columns, plastering the sides of windows, door-posts, corners, and angles on both sides of the road, making us pull down our hats to keep it out of our eyes, and draw closer our overcoats to keep out the cold. Side by side we were battling the storm, and had just passed the home of David's parents, when a well-known voice was heard, not loud, but distinct and earnest, calling, — "David, *David*, DAVID!"

David instantly stood still, saying, "That is my mother;" then turning quickly round, was going back to meet her, when she came up panting for breath, with a shawl over her head. For a moment we all three stood without speaking, then the mother and son both burst out weeping. I stepped on a little in advance, not wishing to obtrude on their sorrow, but heard David say,—

"Well, mother, had it not been for you I should have left home long since. I cannot longer stand my father's conduct,—I have stood it long enough. Be as easy about me as you can, mother; I will try to be a good son, and give you no more trouble than I can help, but I cannot return home again; at least not yet. Go back, mother, for I know that you are not well, and I fear you will take cold; now, do go back."

They parted, both weeping bitterly; and on David overtaking me, I thought it best not to allude to the short, sorrowful interview with his mother; so we walked on to

the end of our journey in silence, he only once observing, "this is hard work."

During the following week I had an interview with David. He frankly, and without reserve, told me his reasons for the step he had taken, carefully avoiding saying anything offensive about his father.

"I did not want to leave home," he observed, "for many reasons. I knew it would greatly pain my mother, and be a bad example to my younger brothers; and reveal to others what only our family knew. I know there is many a worse man than my father, and people, seeing nothing of his inner life, respect him; but I think there are few homes that have fewer smiles, and few children who have to submit to harder words. The day before I left, I was reaching a pound weight from the shelf, and accidentally let it fall, breaking a small square of glass, value about twopence. I felt vexed and sorry for the little mishap. My father stood near, and, as he had done

hundreds of times, began to call me a worthless, blundering blockhead, with many other hard words, in the presence of several persons then in the room. The blood rushed to my face,—I felt insulted and degraded,—and I was deeply mortified, but held my peace. This was about nine in the morning, but during the whole of the forenoon I writhed under his stinging words. On sitting down to dinner I had recovered a little peace of mind, and was disposed to be on good terms with everybody, but no sooner had we all sat down at table, than he began again, by saying,—

"'I wonder if there is any man in the country whose children are such stupid fools as mine. If there be, I pity him.'

"I knew this was aimed principally at me. All desire for dinner instantly fled, and my food lay before me untasted. I held down my head to hide my emotion and my grief. I durst not look at my father, or mother, or sisters, or brothers. I did not know what to do. I quietly rose from the

table, intending to go out of doors and have a good cry, but, in a voice of thunder, he ordered me to sit down. I obeyed without a word, but eat I could not.

"The remainder of that day was like many days in our house, one of silence and sadness. The cheerful, happy look, the ringing laugh, the merry face, so healthful and joyful amongst sisters and brothers, which I have seen and envied in other homes, were banished from ours. After finishing my day's work, I sat down in one corner of the room, intending to calm my mind by reading, for books are one of my chief pleasures. I had not turned over many pages before my father came in. While laying down his hat on the table, he sarcastically and sneeringly said,—

"'I think, sir, your reading does you little good; and I do not intend to have much reading here to-night!'

"I closed the book, thinking I would calmly speak with him, to express my regret for my little mishap in the morning,

and just got out the word 'Father,' when he rose up, and indignantly asked how I dared to speak to him. Seeing that matters only grew worse, I went to my bed-room, though much earlier than usual; he followed me to the bottom of the stairs, calling out,—

"'So, you can turn your back on your father. Fine conduct that, for a son.'

"Then, violently shutting the door, he left me alone to my own thoughts, which, I assure you, were getting terrible. I sat down on the bed, for I had no desire to sleep. My soul was roused, and then the thought first came, that if I remained longer at home I might say something I should regret for ever. I know I am commanded to honour my father and mother, and I have tried to do so. I am twenty years of age, yet I do not recollect ever dishonouring them in word or deed. I have, with the rest of the family, endured much suffering from my father's temper, but I have never replied again, whatever abuse I received."

"Well, David, I can enter into your feel-

ings, and sympathize with you. We have all our cross to carry, and this is yours. Had you not better return home for your mother's sake, and for the sake of your two younger brothers," I observed.

"You need not think I am indifferent to the comfort of my mother and brothers; but at present I cannot return. If I did, my father might not speak to me for weeks. He is always silent and distant with his own children. We never have cheerful, sweet conversation at our fireside, if he be present. If we are happy in his absence, the moment he enters the house, it is all over. His severity to us all is such that I have many times kept out of the house until bed-time, and several times gone to the theatre, though I knew it was wrong, but I have done it for peace and quietness and to put on time. He seems to think it beneath him to chat and talk, and be happy with his own children, like other fathers that I know. I believe he would be glad to see us all do well, for he has not been indif-

ferent to our education, nor careless about our morality; but we never receive any commendation or encouragement for any action; never one word of praise to encourage or nerve us for higher purposes; he is cold as an iceberg, and almost as distant as a perfect stranger. The consequence is, we may respect him, but cannot love him. My brother Philip, now eighteen, said, the night I left home, 'Whether you go or not, I shall before long. I will be wed, or go to America, or the sea, or for a soldier, or somewhere; I will not stop with him,' meaning my father."

After hearing David's statement, and better understanding the whole question, I found it difficult to advise. How sad to think that he who ought to have been the heart and soul of home joys, the mainspring of domestic peace, the prime source of fireside felicity, the cementer of family affections, should, by his bad temper and distant, unsocial disposition, wither and blast every budding hope, and make what

might have been a bright little paradise, miserable, gloomy, and barren. Home ought to be the sweetest, dearest, happiest spot on this side heaven. Home, to be home, must not merely be a place of rest and shelter for the body, but a peaceful, joyful sanctuary for the soul,

> "Where kindred spirits meet
> In harmony to dwell."

Our homes, as a rule, are what we make them, and there is no doubt that thousands of young men are in the army, navy, prisons, penal settlements, or buried in early graves in strange lands, who have been driven from their home and country by the unkind treatment of stern, unbending, perhaps well-intentioned but mistaken fathers. The laudable ambition of the young heart the noble aspirations of the youthful soul droop and die, because trampled on, or rudely shaken by the very hand that ought to have tenderly trained and guided it. If the voice from heaven says, "Children, obey

your parents," it also says, "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, LEST THEY BE DISCOURAGED."

David did not return home, but he kept his promise to his mother, that he would give her as little trouble as possible. He consulted her about a young woman he intended for a wife, and would have talked with his father on the subject, but he would not speak to him, or advise with him, and refused to be present at the marriage.

Philip, David's younger brother, carried out his threat; he went for a soldier. Oh, how full of meaning is that one short sentence; what deep emotions do the red-coats call up, especially amongst mothers; how many have had to bow down their heads in sorrow, and endure unspeakable anguish of soul to see one they have nursed, and blessed, and kissed thousands of times, pass away to distant lands, or bloody fields; cut off, perhaps, for ever from home, every fair hope and prospect blighted. Mothers have not all been able to endure this and

live; and Philip's mother well-nigh sank into the grave.

When the father heard that Philip was really gone, he seemed astonished; he tried to act the stoic, tried to seem indifferent; but, in spite of his iron soul, he could not hide all his feelings from his family. He usually lay down a few minutes after dinner, but he was heard walking up and down his room instead of sleeping. When urged by the mother and his other children to get Philip back, by buying him off, his answer was,—

"I shall not show such weakness; as Philip has made his bed, he must lie."

I am not going to justify the conduct of David and Philip in leaving home. I wish they had both patiently endured their lot, and meekly borne their heavy cross, for the comfort of the rest of the family, especially their mother. This would have been nobler on their part, and perhaps better in the end. Self-denial, suffering for the good of others, is one of the hard lessons of life, but it is a

lesson that often brings a rich reward. Those grand characters that adorn all histories, in every land, are the unselfish; and the grandest of all is He that suffered for us all, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps.

"Do right, and bravely bear each blow,
A blessing will be given—
If not in this bleak world below,
In yonder smiling heaven:
Walk in the way thy Saviour trod,
Do right, and leave the rest to God."

This doing right—this self-sacrifice for the welfare of others, in the fear of God and to the glory of God—sooner or later invariably conquers. It is ever triumphant, and ever will be.

But if unable to justify the conduct of David and Philip, in the course they took, I am less able to excuse their father. That he suffered, there is no doubt; he became more silent. He never mentioned the names of his two sons, and in his presence none but the youngest sister, a little child, durst

speak about them; but this little innocent thing would sometimes climb on her mother's knee, and say,—

"Mother, when will David and Philip come back? Are they gone a long way, mother?"

Philip did not come back, but wrote many letters home; these letters his mother kept treasured in her breast, and often read, and re-read them in silence, and sometimes on her knees in secret. Only once did he mention his father, and then begged his forgiveness for anything he had done wrong. A short letter from the trenches in the Crimea, written on a drum head, came *to his mother*, it was the last letter he ever wrote; three hours later he was killed. Poor Philip! thee and thy brother David are not the only victims of stern Fathers, who have provoked their children to wrath.

I mentioned a little boy, whose greatest pleasure was to hear his father scraping his feet at the door. The family of which this child was one, numbered two more than the

family of David and Philip; they were not quite in as good circumstances, but careful habits and industry had raised them beyond want. The father held the reins of government in his own house, with a firm and steady hand, but he was one of the kindest of men; his children all loved him, and obeyed him more from love than fear, and it was a beautiful sight to see his oldest son arm in arm with the father, going or returning from church on Sunday, or business on the week-day.

I remember once taking dinner with this family; the father was cutting a small joint of meat, when one of his sons, about twenty-six years of age, began to laugh, saying to the father,—"The only time I ever knew mother and you have a wrong word, was about how that joint ought to be cut."

The mother, with a quiet smile, said,—

"I think, Richard, your memory will be at fault, for I do not remember father and

me having a quarrel about anything, since you were born."

"And I'm sure I do not," rejoined the father.

"Well, now, I must explain myself," replied Richard, looking at his mother. "When father began to carve the meat, you said he should cut off the top part first; he said he thought not; you tried to show him the reason why he should, but again he said he thought not. A little colour came into your cheeks, mother, and you seemed mortified."

"Well, Richard," said both, laughing heartily, "we do not recollect the circumstance, and you may perhaps be right; but," observed the father, "mother sometimes blushes when she finds herself in the wrong, not because she is vexed, but because she cannot help it."

"Well, well," said the mother, still laughing, "I am glad Richard's evidence breaks down, and no doubt he will be, too;"—

accompanying the last word with a little squeeze of Richard's left ear.

We had all got to dinner except little Fred, the youngest boy; he sat bolt up before his plate, quiet as a mouse. I was wondering what the lad had done amiss, when the father, in surprise, exclaimed,—

"Dear me, Fred; how is it I have overlooked you, a person of so much importance. I must give you an extra bit, for your patience, my lad."

Fred, with a thank you, took his extra bit, saying,—

"We have always some sort of a spree at our dinners."

I also remember being in this house one evening, talking with the mother and daughter, when the father came in. He seemed tired, and sat down with his back towards the open door, but joined in our conversation. One of his sons, who had been several days from home on business, and was that moment returning, came quietly behind his father, and put both

hands over his eyes. The father smiled, and said,—

"Who dares to take such liberties with me, as to make me play at blind-man's buff? What presumption! I only know three or four persons in the world who durst be so bold, and one of them is my son Peter."

All burst out laughing, and Peter came to the front to shake hands with his father, and told him about a small business transaction in which he had been engaged, and in which he had been over-reached.

"Well, well, my lad, no doubt you have done your best, and you will know better next time; but I am rather weary, and want my shoes off my feet."

A grown-up sister knelt down to unbutton her father's shoes, but Peter caused her to scream out, by catching her under the arms to lift her up, saying,—

"Nay, nay, I am going to have the honour to unloose my father's shoes to day;" and bending down, the strong, stout young man showed himself the worthy son of a worthy

sire,—the loving child of one who in kindness and affection first loved him.

That evening, after supper, the father requested Peter to conduct the family devotion, handing him the Bible and hymn-book. Peter was handing them forward to me, but his mother said,—

"No, Peter, Mr. Ashworth has worked hard to-day, and I think he ought to be excused; you had better do it to-night, my son."

Peter took the books, gave out the hymn,—

"Saviour, breathe an evening blessing,
Ere repose our eyelids seal,"

also led the singing, and reading a portion of the seventh chapter of Acts, then engaged in prayer.

Happy family! Happy father! Happy children!

Oh fathers, never think that a manifestation of parental affection is any sign of weakness; firmness and love to your children beget for you affection and respect.

Better far bury your child's body, than bury his heart; better entomb him altogether, than destroy his love for you. Teach your children by example to love, to love everybody, especially to love you, and more especially to love God; from this will spring a thousand joys, and then home, the home of their parents, the *father's fireside*, will indeed be the sunniest, brightest, sweetest place on this side heaven, and you the most honoured, the most blessed, and the happiest of FATHERS.

THE OLD DEACON.

THAT mysterious law of association, by which the sound of bells, the scent of flowers, the falling of a leaf, or any other incident, calls up from memory's storehouse thoughts and feelings, long since cherished, but almost forgotten, seems by the order of Providence to be a wise arrangement, by which the events of the past shall bear some relation to the things of the present, and often to the future; binding together in a series of links generation after generation, making of all one vast family, so that anything affecting one, in some degree, affects all. The falling of a leaf one calm evening in autumn, became the parent of these re-

flections. The sun had just sunk down behind the hills, tinging the heavens with the purple hues of his departing glory; placid night hung out her sable pall, veiling the distant objects from view,

> And silence, with her mighty eloquence,
> Poured her strange language on the pensive soul.

I sat where I had often loved to sit, beneath the outstretched branches of the balsam poplar; the stillness of the evening was so intense that the striking of the hour of nine by the bell of old St. Chad's reverberated through the dale; and when the undulating sound had died away, the silence was more profound, but broken at length by the tick, tick, tick of a falling leaf, as it dropped from branch to branch, resting finally at my feet. Thoughts unbidden came at the sight of that leaf as it now lay amongst its dead companions. What a lesson if wisely read! How emblematical of this life's changes! How descriptive of relatives and friends, who have dropped from their various spheres, and

now lie in the dust! Never on any previous occasion had so many of those departed ones been brought back to memory: friends, old and young, rich and poor, from towns and hamlets, churches and marts, seemed to gather around me. It was a moment of subdued pleasure. I could not literally shake hands with them, as in bygone days, but I was glad they had stood before me, though only for a few moments. I never could discover a reason why anyone should fear holding mental communion with those departed dear ones, whose company we so much loved when living; they may or may not be unconscious of those sweet recollections that will not say *to them* farewell; we still see their smiling faces, hear their merry laugh, or listen to their cheerful song. We walk with them in the field, sit with them in the garden; mingle our psalms, our hymns, and prayers at the family altar, or in the church. Their well-known opinions govern many of our actions. What we know they would have thought, or what we think they would

have done, exercises no small influence on what we think and what we do; is it not well for us that it is so? Many of the joys of the present, spring from the joys of the past, and no small portion from a remembrance of those we have loved. But the great mistake is, when we make what might be one source of softened gladness, a cause of pain and sadness; murmuring and repining when we ought to calmly submit, and where submission would indicate the truest wisdom. The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, was no foolish expression, for

> "The dead are like the stars, by day
> Withdrawn from mortal eye,
> But not extinct, they hold their way,
> In glory through the sky."

One of the most prominent figures which seemed to stand before me that calm evening, was a grey headed veteran whose locks had become hoary in his Master's service, and one of those singular characters both loved and feared by several who knew him, for

reasons they still remember. He was by trade a flannel weaver; steadiness and industry, in early life, enabled him to become a manufacturer; and by caution, prudence, and perseverance, he secured a competence that enabled him to retire from business, before old age or infirmities compelled him: but he did not travel on the continent to spend his wealth, or build a mansion, or set up his carriage to consume it, or fill his house with servants and fast company to devour it; he knew who had given him all his bank notes, and he knew he would some day be asked what he had done with them, and he tried to be a faithful steward.

I have no wish to forget my first, second, and last interview with the eccentric old man. I had gone down to take service in the church of which he had long been a worthy member, and an active, patient, prudent deacon. For many years his house had been the home of the workers in the Lord's vineyard, irrespective of creed, and he furnished many a hungry ambassador with something more

than a cup of cold water. I was then a very young man, and rather afraid of several in the congregation, the deacon in particular. His countenance was neither placid, sanctified, or heavenly looking, but the very contrary: he had a large face, strong features, his eyebrows fledged with long white bristles, and his hair, iron grey, defying all order; he knew little about syntax, but his language was powerful, and fearfully direct. Talleyrand said "that words were invented to hide thoughts." This may be true in regard to diplomatists, such as Talleyrand was, but the old deacon would have been astonished to have heard him. I had finished my day's work in the pulpit, and on leaving the chapel found the deacon waiting for me at the gate. Placing his arm in mine he said—

"Well, my young friend, I suppose thou will have to take a little provender at my house; thou art very welcome, and that will make the feed no worse."

After the repast, he sitting on one side of

the fire and I at the other, and after a considerable pause he said—

"Art thou married, my young friend?"

"Yes," was my answer.

"And hast thou family prayer in thy house?"

"Yes," I again replied.

"I am glad to hear that. There are many people that can talk loudly about religion abroad that have not much at home; all their religion is for exportation, none for home consumption, but I am always pleased to see young married couples begin right, and there is nothing so likely to keep a family right as a family altar. Many families professing religion have gone wrong for the want of it;—keep up piety at home, my lad, keep up piety at home,—it keeps the fireside warm and comfortable. I am thankful that the very first day our Betty and me began housekeeping, we adopted Noah's plan when he came out of the ark. Did I ever tell thee about it?"

"No, sir, this is our first conversation."

"Well, then, I will begin a little further back. Before I began to follow her, as they say in this country, I was careless, ignorant, and sinful; I thought much about her, but if I offered to speak to her I lost all my words and trembled all over. I followed her at a distance from place to place, and one Sunday evening I followed her into a chapel. And it was well for me I did, I shall never forget that night. The light of the Gospel of Christ shone into my mind with such terrible force that I saw and felt myself a great sinner. I forgot all about Betty in anxiety for the salvation of my soul. The day following, thinking I was the only person in the workshop, I kneeled down under my looms, and began confessing my sins and iniquities in a loud whisper, praying for pardon and peace, while sweat ran down my face. One of the weavers who had entered the room in his slippers, hearing my groans and sobs, stooped down to look at me, and to my astonishment and confusion, said—

"'Well, lad, if thou art half as bad as thou says thou art, thou ought to be sent to Botany-Bay.'

"I made no reply, but was greatly ashamed, and crept from under the looms to commence work. He said nothing to the other weavers about it, for which I was thankful. But the arrow from the Lord had pierced to the depths of my guilty conscience. I durst not again pray in the workshop, and I had no private place at home. I remembered that there was in a neighbouring field an old deserted stone-delph. Again, and again, in that stone quarry did I plead the shed blood of Christ, shed for every sinner, therefore shed for me. At last I found what was more valuable than all the delphs and mines in the world could yield. I found the pearl of great price, and was so happy that I durst tell the man who caught me praying under the looms.

"After considerable difficulty on my part, and unreasonable obstinacy on the part of Betty, we agreed to be married, with the

clear understanding, that at least once each day, the Bible should be read and both join in prayer for God's blessing to rest upon us. We have had many a laugh about our first beginning. Neither of us had ever engaged in prayer audibly in any meeting, though we had both been some time members of the church. So I took hold of the Bible, thinking I could manage that part better than the other. After reading a chapter we kneeled down, and I requested Betty to pray. I waited, and waited, but no voice. Then with a choking utterance, she said,—'John, thee pray, for I cannot.' A big lump came in my throat, and as soon as I could get it down, I replied,—'Nor can I, what must we do?' After kneeling a little longer we rose to our feet without another word, for we could not speak. That was our first attempt at family prayer. And that God who saw the fulness of our hearts recorded our wishes in heaven.

"And while on this subject, I will mention one other occasion when my nerves

were a little tried. Betty and I were very careful and industrious, I as a journeyman weaver, and she as a spinner. We saved a little money, and I bought a pair of looms, a jenny, and other requisite machinery; then another pair, and then another; then bought a pack of wool, and began manufacturing for ourselves, getting on and on until I could keep stock until the market suited me. One rather rough winter day, a dashing gentleman, with plenty of rings and gold chains, came to see my stock of goods. After a careful inspection of the whole he asked my price for all. I told him, and without a word he gave me a cheque on Rawson's bank for the amount. He then put on his coat and gloves, looked out into the dark wet night, and I saw he seemed troubled. The coach was gone, there were no cabs in our neighbourhood, and railways had not then been thought of. He walked back into the house, and forward to a bright fire in the kitchen, our principal sitting room, and asked if he could not get lodgings

somewhere in the neighbourhood. 'Yes,' I replied, 'my wife can make you up a clean, comfortable bed, in a plain way.' You should have seen our Betty's face when I said that, it was almost scarlet, for she was afraid of the fine gentleman; but she quietly went up stairs to make all ready. He took off his overcoat and gloves, and sat down by the kitchen fire, and seemed very glad to remain with us. We talked about wool and pieces, and prospects of trade, until eight o'clock, our time for family devotion. My wife had got all ready for the grand man, and was sitting in her usual place. I was rather timid and had not taken hold of the Bible at the usual time. My wife saw it, and gave me a look which said,

"'What; are you afraid of the big man too? Do your duty and never mind him.'

"That looked nerved me, so I took down the Bible, saying to the merchant,

"'Sir, ever since this dear body and me became man and wife, our custom has been to daily read God's Word and bow down

before Him in prayer. I do not know your views or opinions about these things, but feeling it to be our duty, we hope you will excuse us.'

"'Certainly, certainly,' was the reply.

"I read the one hundred and fourth Psalm, our lesson for the evening, and in prayer besought the Lord to make us thankful for the day's mercies, to bless the dear church to which I belonged, to bless the stranger sojourning with us for the evening, to save him from ever making a bad bargain, and that if his riches should increase, that he might never set his heart upon them; and I prayed for his wife and six children he had left in Scotland, that God would take care of them in the absence of the husband and father, and that not one of them might ever give their parents any trouble, finishing with the verse in the evening hymn,

'O may our souls on Thee repose.'

The gentleman tried secretly to wipe his eyes with his scented pocket handkerchief.

The mention of his wife and children had touched his soul.

"I did much business with the fine Scotchman to our mutual profit, and he never sent an order without a note saying, 'Do not forget the Scotchman and his family when you pray, and use the words of that memorable night I was your guest, especially that part 'may not one of his children ever give their parents any trouble.'

"I did well in business, not only with the Scotchman, but with many others; and now, by God's blessing, I am provided with bread, but I am not without my crosses, and they always come from the wrong quarter, but they frequently remind me of an old pack-horse driver that travelled this way fifty years since, he was a good Christian man, carrying his goods on the backs of two horses, from Manchester to Leeds and Halifax. One of these horses was black, and if he was well loaded, and as much on his back as he could carry, he would walk on safely, steady, and straight, and his master

had no anxiety about him; but if he had a little load, and especially none at all, he would kick and gallop, leap over hedges, or run through gaps and open gates, getting both the driver and himself into scrapes and trouble. I am just like that wayward black pack-horse, when the load is heavy and I have to cry to the Lord to help me to carry it, and when I feel my weakness and dependence the most, then am I the most strong, and walk the most safely. And the Lord knows that, and for my own good, and perhaps for the good of others, He keeps me well weighted; but, bless Him, He will lay on me no burden but what He will enable me to carry."

I knew to what the deacon more especially referred when he was talking about his burdens, they mostly came from the church: and ever since the first seven deacons were chosen in Jerusalem to the present hour, deacons have had their full share of anxiety on behalf of others. A link between the pulpit and the pew, the minister and the

people, they have often to carry the sins of both. A church, prosperous and at peace, is to them, real happiness, a troubled, declining church is a perpetual sorrow; and with all their failings the church and the world owe much to patient, plodding, enduring deacons.

I have mentioned that the old deacon was very direct and pointed in his observations, he knew nothing of circumlocution. He was loving, honest, straightforward, and wished to do everybody good, as the following circumstance will fully illustrate:

I had called to take tea with him one Sunday. During the repast he was silent, and seemed a little troubled. A young man sat at the table who had been preaching that afternoon what he thought to be a most magnificent sermon, from the text, "All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord, and thy saints shall bless Thee." He opened out his discourse in a grandiloquent style, quoting from Young, "Morning stars exulting shouting o'er the rising ball;" from Shakespeare, "The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous

palaces," and that sublime piece from Pollok's *Course of Time*, beginning,

"Whose garments were the clouds ;
Whose minstrels, brooks ; whose lamps, the moon and stars ;
Whose organ choir, the voice of many waters ;
Whose banquets, morning dews ; whose heroes, storms ;
Whose warriors, mighty winds ; whose lovers, flowers ;
Whose orators, the thunderbolts of God ;
Whose palaces, the everlasting hills ;
Whose ceiling, heaven's unfathomable blue."

Mounting up still amongst what he called the stellar worlds, he expatiated on the satellites of Saturn, Uranus, and Jupiter, and finished his æriel flight in the milky way. After tea, the old deacon requested the young preacher to go with him into the front parlour. When both were seated he said—

"My young man, thou hast been flying thy kite high this afternoon, very high, and if thou does not mind the string will break, and it will come wibble wabble down. Thou hast been walking over the stars in stilts,

cloud-capp'd towers shouting, o'er the rising ball, satellites, Jupiter, and milky way, indeed! It is thin milk in the pulpit. Thou got so high up, thou never saw Calvary where the Maker of all died for those gospel-hardened sinners that were staring at thee; thou never told us that the work of God that praises Him most was the work of redemption, shedding His blood for a guilty world. My dear young friend, do come down before thou tumbles down; keep at the foot of the cross, it is he and only he that humbleth himself that shall be exalted, either in the pulpit or out."

Few can conceive the agony of the young preacher, while the old deacon was so tenderly crushing him. He had to preach again the same evening, and preach to this terrible old man. He was in great fear, and trembled as he walked up the pulpit steps. During prayer he wept, and the people wept with him. Christ crucified for perishing mortals was his theme, and God blessed His *own* word, as He ever will. The old

deacon met him at the church gate, saying—"Thou wilt have to pass my house, and must call to take as much supper as ever thou likes, let me take hold of thy arm, for thou art younger than me. And now, my dear young brother, God has blessed us all to-night; I have been with the Master, and Peter, James, and John on the mount, for we never get on the mount without the Master. The Lord will make thee a very useful preacher when He has cured thee of cloud-capp'd towers."

The young minister never forgot the old deacon's theological lecture, nor ever will, but he counts him as one of his truest and best friends. He never walked over the stars in stilts after that day.

With all his mildness of disposition, his love and encouragement given to the humble and sincere, it will be seen how he could not bear foppery in the pulpit. The cloud-capped towers young man fared little worse than another rather inflated orator, who, when speaking, frequently twisted his fingers

in a rather showy watchguard, and had so corked up his nose with snuff that it was painful to hear him speak, as it is with all snuff takers. The hymn, "Awake, and sing the song of Moses and the Lamb," was from his mouth—

"Awake, ad sig the sog
Of Boses ad the Lab."

This important man, when once taking tea with the old deacon, said—

"I think, Mr. Kershaw, it is woe unto me if I preach not the Gospel." To which he received the answer:—"And woe unto the Gospel if thou does preach it." But so intense was the probationer's conceit that even this keen reproof was lost upon him. He only laughed at it. It would have been well for him if he had profited by it as the other young man did.

My last interview with the venerable pilgrim was one calm Sabbath evening, when his work was nearly done. I never see grey heads—those crowns of glory—

drop from the ranks of the church militant, but I know that church has sustained a great loss. Grey heads amongst young officers are ballast, for young officials are all clever, very clever; and yet I love to see young officers in the Christian church; the church needs them; they are the future hope of the church, and allowance must always be made for their youth; they mean well, and in time will think and do well. But the young in any Christian community would do well to set a very high value on age and experience; woe be to the church that rejects the counsel of grey heads.

For many years it has been my custom to get to the sea-side as often as I possibly can, for I love the mysterious ocean, and often talk to its rolling waves, and sometimes to the countless pebbles and boulders that lie on the shores. Taking one up that was round and smooth, I addressed the stone, as if a living being, saying—

"Mr. Boulder, you are very smooth and

very round; have you always been so smooth and so round?"

Could the stone have spoken he would have said—

"No, I have not always been smooth and round, I had once sharp corners on me; but I have been in many storms and many tempests, and those storms have rolled me out, and rolled me in, until they have rubbed all the sharp corners off, and now I am smooth."

So it is with old deacons, officers, and members; they have been in life's many storms, and sharp corners have been rubbed off them. Sad experience has mellowed them down, and they are invaluable to our churches. But leave us they must. The moment I beheld the now sick and feeble deacon, on the day of our final interview, it was evident the weary wheels of life would soon stand still. It was the Sabbath-school anniversary that day, and for more than forty years he had taken great interest in school anniversaries, but for him the last

was come, and unknown to him the teachers and scholars formed in procession, the girls all clothed in white, and went to sing the last song in this world for their dear old friend. Betty, the now aged Betty, his beloved companion through years of travel, sat near his couch, looking out at the open window, on the Dearnley vale. When the procession stopped at the front of the house, Betty, in a low but earnest tone, exclaimed,—

"Dear me, dear me, what is this?"

The teachers and children, in full rich tones, sang, "When I survey the wond'rous cross," and "There is sweet rest in heaven." The good old dying Christian, for whom they were singing, held his withered hands together. With swimming eye, he said,—

"It is too much, it is too much. What have I done to deserve this? Oh, what joy, what joy! Lord Jesus, thou Prince of Glory, that died on the cross! save every one of these dear teachers and scholars, so that I may hear them sing again in heaven! Save them, save them!"

A few days after, the inhabitants of the village of Dearnley, looked out from their doors and windows to take their sad farewell of old John Kershaw, long their neighbour, and long their friend, and many are still living who will remember the good OLD DEACON.

LITTLE SUSAN.

To watch the lively pranks of little children as, with glee and wild delight, they hop, and skip, and dance, and romp, and run; to hear them sweetly sing their artless, tuneless cherub songs, or tell their wondrous tales of father, mother, sister Jane, and little Tom; or see them twine their puny arms around each other's necks in guileless love, or fill their tiny hands with primroses, daisies, buttercups, and bluebells, is one of those pure scenes that gives to earth its sunshine, and links the soul to holier thoughts which have their source in heaven.

If we could imagine a world without children it would be a sad and sombre world,

—like a garden without flowers, a forest without the song of birds, a sky without stars. Children answer many other purposes besides the perpetuating of the human race; they are little peace-makers, beams of light, fountains of love; they open the pent-up springs of emotion, and mellow and soften petrified feelings; they awaken slumbering energies, and give new life to expiring sympathies. Many a selfish, frozen soul has been melted by the sight of helpless infancy; many a dark and wicked project has been arrested by the thought of the sorrow and disgrace it would bring on the little angels sleeping in the crib or cradle.

And has not the whole Christian church been taught a grand lesson by a little child? When the first disciples disputed among themselves who should be the greatest—a dispute that still causes ALL the disturbance in the Christian church—the meek and lowly Saviour, who loved the young, took a child and set him in the midst of them, saying, "Whosoever shall humble himself as a little

child, the same is the greatest;" and "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child, he shall not enter therein." This was a severe rebuke to the contentious disciples, and is so still to proud, haughty, imperious souls; such are offended and amazed at this teaching,—

So low they will not stoop,
And so miss heaven.

But though little children are often great blessings, there are times when we look upon them with mingled feelings; when the father who, with honest toil, has won them bread, and clothes, and home, feels his strength fast failing, and when, in spite of means employed, or hope to cheer, he falls from the ranks of labour to lay his feeble, helpless form on a bed of sickness—perhaps of death; then to look on the little innocent prattlers, who will soon be left fatherless, has called forth many a sigh, and watered many a sunken cheek with hot unbidden tears. It is indeed a moment of sadness, and poor in-

deed is that man who at this moment has no strong arm to lean upon; who in his deepening sorrow hears not the promise of Him who says, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in me." There is such a promise, and that promise was to the dying father of little Susan a stronghold in a time of heavy trouble.

It was on one of my journeys, and at the house of a kind friend, when I first saw little Susan. She came in her sleeping-robes to shake hands and bid me good night.

"And how many of these little folks do you count?" I asked, addressing the husband and wife.

They both looked at the child, and giving her the evening kiss, sent her to bed, the husband saying,—

"Yon little dear is one we have begged, and adopted as our own; and I rather think my wife would like to tell you how it was she came here, for she has an impression that an invisible hand brought us Susan."

"Well, sir," began the wife, "one Sunday evening, feeling rather poorly, I durst not venture to go to our place of worship, and as I sat alone and quiet in the parlour, I heard some children playing in the street. I opened the door, and invited them all to come in, promising to tell them something about a little girl, and read them a nice tale out of a little book. They all knew me, and at once gladly came in, and sat down round the fire. While I was reading and talking to them, and looking on their bright eyes, and innocent lovely faces, I felt my heart fill with deep emotion. Oh, how my soul was knit to the young lambs. That moment I had a yearning wish to seek out some poor, fatherless child, and take it for my own, with the special object of training it up in the fear of the Lord, and providing an occupation by which it might honourably earn a living. On another Sunday evening, as I again sat alone, being still out of health, I felt these desires stronger than ever, and I believe prayed that we might be guided in finding

some poor child that had lost one or both parents, and decided that I would speak to my husband about it on his return. When he came from church, I told him of my resolve, requesting him to comply with my wish; we both saw the responsibility it would involve, and knew it would entail great anxiety; but after looking at the matter on all sides, we agreed that one should be sought out. The following morning the postman brought this letter:—

'*Welshpool, December 1st*, 1867.

'DEAR COUSIN,

'I have not the pleasure of knowing you, but through my dear husband, Joseph Harrison. I am grieved to send to you the sad news, by his own wishes, how very ill he is. The doctors have no hope of his recovery; he has been very ill at home since the 26th of September. It is consumption. Oh, how grieved I am to part with such a faithful companion as dear Joseph has been to me the few years we have been together. I must bear the loss as well as I can; my loss will be his gain; the Lord's will be done. I have four little children; the eldest eight years of age, the youngest not two. He has a great desire to see his cousins Margaret and John. Dear Joseph, his time is

getting short in this world, but I am thankful to see him so resigned to go whenever the summons calls.

'Believe me, your cousin,

'——— ———.'

"This letter must have been in the post-office at the very moment we were talking about looking out for some poor child to adopt, and great was our astonishment on reading it, for we both thought that our longed-for child was found, and our excitement was such that we instantly prepared for setting out for Welshpool by the next train.

"Our early arrival surprised our cousins, as much as their letter had surprised us. The poor wife, soon to be a widow, with swimming eyes shook us by the hand; her words were few. Hope for her dear husband was gone; he was fast sinking to the tomb. We quietly laid aside our travelling clothes, and sat down to wait until Joseph had been apprised of our presence, and be prepared to receive us. The four dear children men-

tioned in the letter, neat and orderly, were in the room. I saw my husband fix his eyes on one, he called her to him and asked her name; the little creature, blushing, told him she was called Susan; he took her by the hand and then looked at me, I nodded consent, for I could not speak; so the choice was made, provided the parents were agreeable.

"The sick father received us with evident pleasure, and told us as well as he was able that his journey was nearly ended; that for his wife and children's sake he had struggled hard against what he had been forced to submit to; that it was long before he could consent to die, but now he had resigned all hope of life here, but not in the life to come, for he now could say, 'Father, not my will, but Thine be done.'

"There is a something real in a sick room, something that forces solid thought, truth that brings reflection. As I sat beside the bed of Joseph and saw his pallid cheeks and thin wasted hands, I remembered what a

fine strong man he had been, and knew he was but a few hours from the grave, and his eternal doom. Eternity, with all its import, was fast closing around him, and time with him soon would be no longer. Oh! how unspeakably precious in that moment is the Saviour, the Friend of sinners, the world's Redeemer; to feel then that we are His, to have the living witness in our never-dying souls, that our sins are pardoned, our peace made with God through Christ, and when the earthly sun is setting, have a clear view of our glorious mansion, our future home, our home in heaven. This, and this only, can meet the requirements of the deathbed. For what are worldly riches then? What is all this world can give? If the soul be not saved then, if that soul from any cause be lost, millions of worlds could not redeem it. Thoughts like these may come at other times, but are sure to come in the chamber of the dying.

"It was long before my husband could

prefer his request, but at last he said in broken words,

"'Joseph, if you have not made your will, and if you think of doing so, I wish you would leave us little Susan; we will take her for our own child, and, I hope, train her in the right way, that she may be a blessing to us and be happy herself.'

"The father turned his face toward the wall, and remained long silent, for he was weeping. We waited in breathless suspense for his first words. With unexpected calmness he replied, as he looked on his sobbing wife,

"'I have no will to make, for I am poor enough, but I have often thought how desolate my dear family would be; this has given me bitter sorrow and anguish of heart, yet I am forced to leave them to Him who will be a father to the fatherless, and a judge to the widow. I know you will love my dear Susan, and make her a good home, and if my poor wife will give her consent, it is

perhaps the best thing that could come to the child. I think it is.'

"The poor wife, her eyes red with crying, at last consented, but observed,

"'You will now call Susan your own child, but I must call her mine too, dear, dear Susan.'

"The father then said, 'Reach down the Bible, and read the part where Abraham offered up his son Isaac, for I shall better understand it now, it is so like my own case.'

"I read the chapter he asked for, but under the circumstances it was hard work to get through it without breaking down. When it was finished, the father said,—

"'Well, the blessing of God went with Isaac, and God's blessing will go with Susan, I feel it will.'

"We have had many things to test our feelings and try our nerves since we were married, but I think we never had harder work than bringing Susan away. The collecting of her toys, her doll, her little

garments, and when she was ready, the parting; the kiss from her mother, who seemed as if she would never let her go, the kiss from her little brother and sisters, and the last kiss from her dying father. Oh! it was a trying scene. Susan seemed composed, the little thing could not understand the full meaning, and perhaps it is well she did not; it was a sad time for those who did.

"It was late when we arrived home; several of our neighbours came in to see our new treasure. When she got on her night-dress and cap, and was ready for bed, we asked her if she could say her prayers. 'Yes,' she said, kneeling down at my side. Every eye was fixed on the dear child, and when her clear, musical voice, so new and strange in our house, repeating her taught devotions, came to 'bless my father,' we none of us could stand it, and we all broke down; the prayer of the little creature did us all good and softened every heart. I thought I never felt so near to God as I did that moment."

Ah! thought I, as the new parents of Susan finished this part of their story, "it did them all good;" out of the mouths of babes and sucklings God has perfected praise; the soon to be fatherless child had unconsciously drawn out hearts to implore blessings on herself. What a comfort it is to those that are called to leave their little ones, to know that God in His goodness has given special orders on their behalf, and surrounds them with a special providence. How many widows, left with young, fatherless children, have, in after years, when those children have grown up, expressed their wonder and surprise at the way in which Providence has opened out their path, and watched over them for good, never leaving, never forsaking them. God's promises fail not. Speaking to us in His Holy Word He says, "Ye shall not afflict any fatherless child, for God executes the judgment of the fatherless; and in Him shall the fatherless find mercy; for Thou art the Helper of the fatherless." He also tells us that one of the

tests of pure religion is to "visit the fatherless in their affliction." Sweet words these to dying parents, for He that promises is able to perform, and does perform. Perhaps in no nation or period in past history have so many evidences of the Lord's care for helpless children been manifested as at the present time in our own country. We have many homes for orphans, but there is one that is a wonder to the whole world. God never leaves himself without a witness to His unchangeable truth, and George Muller has, no doubt, been raised up to show the amazing effects of faith with works, and to be an everlasting rebuke to those who doubt the power of prayer or the indifference of Jehovah to the affairs of men, and in this case especially showing heaven's regard for the helpless young. From this year's report, which Mr. Muller has kindly sent me, I find he has now under his care twelve hundred and ninety-nine children, every one of which is without either father or mother; living in fine, large, healthy, and palace-like build-

ings, erected expressly for them, and has this year received for their support from all parts of the world, twenty-one thousand pounds, without asking anyone but his God for a single farthing. This army of orphans has many a time eaten its last meal, but never yet were they one short.

Never shall I forget, nor do I ever wish to forget, my feelings and emotions on entering these heaven's orphan houses at Bristol. The first room I visited was where the very youngest children were crowing and laughing, and playing with almost every variety of toys. I gathered all their dolls together in the middle of the room, piling them up in one heap, to see if they could all tell their own; soon a general scramble took place, and amidst a yell of delight, all secured their precious treasures. Room after room was visited, all kept in neat order, and full of children of a corresponding age, each clean, and looking healthy and happy. To nurse, feed, clothe, educate, and train the hundreds of orphans to earn their

own bread, is something, but their loving earthly friend has a higher object still; he trains them for the skies, to meet again in a better world their parents who are gone before. In one room—the room containing those just springing into active life, to years of thought, the good seed sown was bringing early fruit. As I rose to address them, the mild-faced teacher said, "You may speak to them of the love of Christ for sinners, for many of them are beginning to love Him who first loved them; at least fourteen are not far from the kingdom of grace, if they have not already entered, and others have their faces Zionward. Bring them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord is our order from heaven, and we work, and pray, and hope that we may be able to do it." They sang their hymn, sat down, and then expected me to take my part. I thought, but did not then speak, of the pathetic lines I had often quoted in my early days, of one who sadly said,

"Alas! I am an orphan boy,
With naught on earth to cheer my heart;
No father's love, no mother's joy,
Nor kin, nor friend, to take my part.
My lodging is the cold, cold ground;
I eat the bread of charity;
And when the kiss of love goes round,
Alas! there is no kiss for me.'

How different were the smiling faces before me from this one poor child, who had lost his father in battle, and his mother of a broken heart, and left a homeless wanderer. Here is a paradise of fatherless and motherless children, under God's special care, and George Muller, God's humble, believing agent. When I saw the good man walking in procession with one division of his juvenile charge, I thought of their parents, who in their dying moments had looked with unspeakable sorrow upon these children. How it would have soothed their last hours, could they have seen that they would be sheltered in such a merciful home.

Susan, too, had got to a home where those who begged her from her dying father,

believe that man does not live by bread alone; for there she was surrounded with religious influences, the Bible was daily read, and when that book is made the instructor and guide, when its blessed doctrine and precept regulate the thoughts and actions, there is peace in that house. Of the bible it is truly said,—

> "Here may the wretched sons of want,
> Exhaustless riches find,
> Riches above what earth can grant,
> And lasting as the mind."

This cannot be truly said of any other book, nor of all the other books in the world. None but the wicked despise it, and they despise it because they are wicked. Give me a fireside where the word of God is read, with daily prayer, and when the family can say that the courts of the Lord's house are a joy, and the Sabbath of the Lord a delight. Misery may press into that house, but it can never enter. Happy are those

children, however lowly, who have such a fireside, such a sweet little Eden.

Susan's real mother had not neglected her children, and it was very soon evident that the child had a mind capable of fast taking instruction. Any book, but especially books with pictures, she would get if she could: her improvement at school and in the house pleased her friends. One morning, family worship was conducted without the presence of her second mother, who was sick in bed. After it was over, Susan got the bible, went up stairs, and gently opening the chamber door, and going to the bedside, said,

"Mother, shall I read for you this morning out of my Bible."

"I think you cannot read well enough yet, my child; you shall some day."

"Yes, but I can read some: will you let me try; you can tell me the hard words, mother."

"Very well, dear, you can begin."

Susan choosing a place she had often

read before, the twenty-third Psalm, began, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake," &c.

To hear a little child read is always interesting, but Susan's reading that morning completely overcame her mother. Such a sweet voice reading such precious words, amply repaid all the trouble and care that had been taken to teach her.

A few days after Susan arrived at her new home at New Mills, another letter came from her mother, with the expected, but still painful intelligence:—

"DEAR COUSINS,

"You will now receive the sad news. Joseph departed this morning. Oh! my dear cousins, what a solemn thing death is. We inter him on Thursday. Dear little Susan! give her a kiss for me."

Susan's new parents rightly judging that

in after days the child might wish to have been at the funeral of her father, provided her suitable mourning, and on the day of interment took her down to Welshpool. She was pleased to see her little sisters, and her real mother, and pleased with her new clothes. The oldest child of eight years had some conception of the mournful cause that had brought so many to the house, all dressed in black; but the other three innocents could only look on in surprise and wonder.

If there be a scene in this world that can draw out our sympathy to its very depths, that can touch and melt the hardest heart, it is to witness helpless children standing round the open grave of a parent; the hand that gave them strength, the knee on which they sat, the lips they kissed, the voice that cheered, all lying in the coffin below their feet, cold, stiff, and silent,—silent for ever. One prop gone, and over the opening path of life in which their little feet begin to tread, hangs the dark shadow of the ominous cloud; but behind that cloud there is a watchful

eye, and when it is the darkest, there is still a voice,—a voice that cheers the saddest soul; and faith, hearing that voice, exclaims, "In Him the fatherless find mercy; for He is the helper of the fatherless."

OLD MATTHEW.

THE short and simple records of the poor will ever have their interest; for amongst the sons and daughters of daily toil, myriads of whom are doomed to pass their lives in obscurity, many may be found patiently enduring their lot, with submission, fortitude, and even cheerfulness, counting their mercies and measuring their blessings, not by endless wants, but by what they need—making the things of the world without subordinate to the grander world within, and confirming the testimony of one of their order who found it possible to be "troubled, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair;" "cast down, yet not destroyed;" "as sorrow-

ful, yet always rejoicing;" "as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." This language to the world without is a foolish paradox; yet it is a glorious truth; and old Matthew Shepherd adds one more to the millions of witnesses.

Those who have read "My New Friends," in the first volume of "Strange Tales," may possibly remember that amongst the remarkable characters composing our first congregation at the Chapel for the Destitute, there was one man that knelt down, and offered up a singular prayer, beginning with:

"O Lord! I thank Thee on my bended knees for what Thou hast done for a lot of the worst men and women in Rochdale. Who could have thought of seeing us on our knees praying? We cannot laugh at one another, for we have all been bad enough, and we are all poor as Lazarus; but if we are poor in pocket, we are getting rich in faith, and that's better than o' th' brass i' th' world. I saw some rich folks in the market buying fat geese and legs of mutton, but I

had to be content with a penny red herring; I thought there's a difference, but I do not envy them, for I dare say they have their troubles of some sort. Brass does not give as much comfort as religion. Jesus Christ sent the disciples to tell John that the poor had the gospel preached to them; and the gospel gives more comfort than brass, fat geese, and legs of mutton."

It is now near ten years since old Matthew so astonished me with his petition, and during the whole of those ten years he has gone in and out, and been a great favourite amongst us, because of his remarkable eloquence, simplicity, and originality. He was by trade a flannel weaver,—a business that in his younger days was regarded as the most honourable and lucrative of all employments, and the weavers were the most proud and self-important of men. Fifty years since, thousands of the inhabitants of Rochdale and surrounding villages carried on the manufacturing operations in their own dwellings. There houses were large and

well-lighted for the purpose ; the occupation was easy and healthy; large families were then great blessings, for all could find suitable and profitable employment under the parents' roof; and in well-regulated homes the dignity of labour was seen in its beauty, and yielded to the workmen a rich bounty. There were then, as now, and ever will be, occasional fluctuations in trade, which brought distress, especially amongst the improvident, but the frugal and prudent lifted their heads amongst the most respectable in society. The flannel weavers in the hamlets and on the banks of the Roche were then thought to excel as singers—the occupation was favourable to the development of the lungs—and the solo, duet, and chorus often rose above the rattle of the shuttle or hum of the spindle. But many of the songs then sung would sound strange now; they were not Church songs, but generally such as could be sung in the public-house on Saint Monday or Tuesday,—songs of love, war, sea, storms, shipwrecks, rights of man,

tyrants, and three blind mice. On these Saint Mondays, firey orators tried their powers of eloquence, denouncing all oppressors, but more especially flannel manufacturers; higher wages were demanded, committees and public meetings followed, all the shuttles in the whole country were forcibly taken, and all work for months suspended, to compel the masters to comply with the terms demanded. Distress, riots, and the reading of the riot act followed; the soldiers fired on the maddened multitude,—some were killed, many imprisoned, and a few transported, and numbers long remembered this battle of the shuttle gathering of 1829.

It was during these times of turnouts and troubles in trade, that many of those marvellous inventions that made the machine almost a living thing took place; and though the enraged weavers, in formidable mobs, often broke them to pieces, still the inventions went on, for the masters, anxious to keep their customers and supply their orders,

submitting to necessity, began to build huge factories for the new machinery,—and to the young and the strong they gave employment in these immense workshops. Thus the mingled sound of the rattle of the shuttle, the buzz of the spindle, the solo, the duet, and the chorus died away in the rural homestead, —and Matthew, like many others, was left a stranded vessel on a waveless shore.

A singular circumstance connected with one of the Saint Monday flannel weavers, a neighbour of old Matthew's, may be useful to some of the Saint Monday men now. This man had saved a guinea for the express purpose of having a whole week's fuddle. He began on the Rushbearing Monday, spending three shillings per day for seven days; on the morning of the eighth day he was burning with thirst, but his money was done. He went to the back door of the drunkery where he had spent every farthing of his guinea, to beg a pint on trust. Judy, the landlady, was mopping the passage; he stood looking at Judy, with his cracked lips,

parched tongue, and bloodshot eyes, expecting her to ask him to just a drop; but she did not, and he requested her to trust him only one pint. With an indignant look of scorn and contempt, she replied,—

"Trust thee! thou dirty, idle vagabond; set a step in this house, and I will dash this mop in thy face."

The poor wretch hung down his head in shame. He was leaning against a pump; and, after a little study, began to talk to the pump.

"Well, Pump," he said gravely, "I have not spent a guinea with thee, Pump: wilt thou trust me a drop?" He lifted up the handle, put his burning mouth to the spout, and drank to his fill. This done, he again said to the pump,—"Thank thee, Pump; and now hear me, Pump:—I will not enter a public-house again for the next seven years, so help me, God; and, Pump, thou art a witness."

The bargain was kept, and this man afterwards became a respectable manufacturer,

and often said, "It was a grand thing for him that Judy threatened to dash the mop in his face."

My first acquaintance with old Matthew bagan one Sunday morning. I was seeking all the roughs I could find, and inviting all the street loungers, or any that attended no place of worship, to our evening service at the "Destitute." Five or six men that stood at the corner of St. Mary's Gate seemed disposed to have a tilt with me; one of them, who had on a poor drab cotton jacket, speaking in a civil and respectful manner, said,—

"Mr. Ashworth, look at this jacket, and look at my whole garments. Would you go into any church or chapel dressed as I am; now, would you?"

"I know that a man with self-respect must keenly feel being poorly dressed, especially on the Sabbath, and no doubt this keeps many from the church," I replied; "but perhaps in your case the fault may be your own. Are you a sober man?"

"Yes, I am a sober man, and have only sixteen shillings per week wages; and there are six to keep out of it, for I am the only one that earns a penny in our house."

"Well, my man, your case is bad enough; but there is one comfort for the poor. God does not judge us by the shape of our coat, or quality of our cloth. Our Saviour was poor, and He lived amongst and preached the Gospel to the poor, and the common people heard Him gladly."

A voice behind me said, "Bless Him! bless Him! He was poorer than any of us, and He was poor for us, and He just suits poor folks; bless Him!"

I turned round to look at the speaker, and saw a thin-faced, white-haired old man. It was old Matthew; and that evening the poor man with the drab jacket and old Matthew made two more to our congregation.

This Sunday morning's conversation had struck a chord in old Matthew's soul,—a chord now more feeble than in former years, but not entirely unstrung.

In his earlier years he had been amongst the Primitive Methodists. He joined them during the time of that great revival, when Hugh Bourne and Clowes, whose zeal for dying souls could not be bound by chapel walls or printed rules, raised their standard on Mow Cop Hill, and with trumpet voices sang to burning words those spirit-stirring songs which melted stout and flinty hearts, —those songs, fervent prayers, and earnest gospel words, went down to the deep depths of moral darkness, and from those depths the cry for mercy came from many a breaking heart. Those hedge and highway heralds knew no unconsecrated ground :—

> **He who was their theme, said "Go ;"**
> **They heard His voice, and went.**

The fields almost forsaken they re-occupied, and from those fields have gathered no mean harvest. And as souls were saved, and men were born again, they did what Christ bid him to do who came out of the tombs,— they told their friends what great things

God had done for them; and hence arose a band of men whose hearts God had touched. These men never thought that a study of segments and circles, lines and angles, was any preparation for preaching the gospel; they cared little for metaphysics or mathematics. Their college was the prayer meeting, and their only work on theology the Bible; their logic, "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." Their great, and grand, and all-engrossing theme was Calvary,—Christ crucified for sinners. This fired their souls, and every man was ready to stand side by side with the prophet in the wilderness, and cry, "Behold the Lamb of God!" If these gatherings were sometimes noisy, it arose from the constitutional temperament of their converts,—men who had once been loud in the service of Satan, would now be loud in the service of God. If their hearts were changed, their lungs were not. Their trumpet voices, especially on the morning of their camp-meetings, have disturbed many

an ungodly sluggard in his bed, and set his guilty conscience to work; have brought the tear of contrition from the eye of many a street lounger and many an unwashed sinner. These Primitives have their own mission, have done and are doing a mighty work, for if they are the best fishermen who catch the most fish, these worthy men will take no mean station beside the fishermen of Galilee.

Matthew heard them preach, believed the gospel, and joined these ardent souls. He learned their favourite nervous songs, and ever retained a love for what he called "the blue sky chapel," meaning open air services. For a long time he was a member amongst them, but for several years previous to the morning that I met with him, from some cause, he had not been regular in his attendance, but he was always a peaceable, sober man. He was never drunk but once, and then it was from a neighbouring gentleman giving him one half pint of twenty years' old beer. This had such effect on him

that, on entering the house, he tumbled over the cradle, and as he lay sprawling on his back in the corner, he shouted out to his astonished wife,—

"I have only had one gill, I have only had one gill; it is not my fault; I have only had one gill."

That drink brings untold misery, none can deny; but Matthew was not the victim of this parent of all crime. Whether from want of business enterprise, or neglecting opportunities which all have more or less, I know not, but Matthew had one long-protracted and exhausting trial,—a trial from which the people of God are not entirely exempt, but which religion always modifies and makes tolerable to be borne. This trial was poverty. We know that poverty often comes from extravagance, ignorance, want of forethought, or bad management—but not always; sickness, low wages, with families of young children, scarcity of work, or feeble limbs from old age, often bring poverty. Again, poverty is relative; one

man would think himself very poor with what another would think great riches. It is wonderful how nearly balanced are the things of this life which give to life its joys or sorrows. And Matthew's native eloquence would sometimes show this with great force.

Amongst our other meetings at the Chapel for the Destitute, there is one to talk about religion, called an experience meeting. Matthew loved this communion of saints. One evening he said :—

"My friends, I was happy this morning. My old limbs are getting clumsy and stiff, but a short walk loosens my joints a bit, so I took a walk up Falinge-road. Sun wor shining, and in those big trees that nearly meet over the road, scores of birds were singing and chirping with all their might. I sat down under the trees to hearken them. How they did sing, to be sure! I thought, well, some of those birds were sparrows; how happy they are! Our Saviour talked about sparrows. He told us our Father in heaven noticed and fed them every one. Ah! I

thought, that is grand, for sure! An' I thought, well, God thinks better o' one of His childer than many sparrows; an' I am one of His childer, and in His sight worth all the sparrows in the trees o'er my head, and more, too! an' if He feeds them He'll feed me, that's certain. These thoughts filled my soul with such a flood of love, that I cried for joy. I thought, if sparrows chirp and birds sing, I ought to sing a vast deal louder; so I sang and cried for gladness. This is part of what I sang:—

'No foot of land do I possess,
No cottage in this wilderness;
A poor wayfaring man:
A while I sojourn here below,
And gladly wander to and fro,
Till I my Canaan gain.'

Ah! thought I, my Canaan is not far off. Methodists used to sing that hymn more than they do now. Many of them are getting rich; they have both land and cottage, and so they cannot sing it now,—but I can.

Well, well, I envy nobody in the world. I have had a bit of supper before I came; I roasted a red herring before the fire, an' fried a few cold potatoes in a bit of old butter, an' it wor very tasty and good. I think it is better to be a little bit short, an' like it, than have the house full and no stomach for it. They say some rich folk ride out in their carriages to get appetite; but I never have to seek for that; mine is sharp enough; and I think if th would miss a meal or two, it would sharpen theirs. But one thing I am sure of,—we cannot be poor if we have Christ, and we cannot be rich without Him. Bless Him! bless Him!"

Old Matthew's words were singularly confirmed a few hours later, by another poor Christian I was requested to call and see. The moment I saw the placid countenance of this gray-haired old pilgrim, I knew him, and was astonished he was still alive. He sat by the fire in the humble but clean cottage in which he was a lodger. Placing my hat on the table, and a chair beside him, I

laid my hand on his knee, saying,—"My dear old friend, I am pleased to see you. How are you, Mr. Stott?"

Rearing up in his arm-chair, and looking me in the face, he replied,—"My name, sir, is not Mr. Stott; it is John Stott. Will you please tell me your name?"

Laughing at his frankness, I informed him who I was.

He rose from his chair, put his hand on my shoulder, and with a tremulous voice implored heaven's blessing to rest upon me; and then, resuming his seat, he several times exclaimed, "Praise the Lord! praise the Lord!"

"How old are you now, Mr. Stott?" I asked.

"Well, sir, in a few days I shall be ninety years of age," he replied.

"And how long have you been a member of the Church?"

"Well, sir, I was converted at twenty; so I have been joined to the Church of my

Saviour seventy years, and never reproved or turned out, thank God."

"I am pleased to think that you are well provided for in your old age; you seem comfortable," I observed.

"Yes, sir, the Lord does provide. What I have would be thought very little by some folk, but I make it do very well. I like plain meat; it suits me best, and costs little. I have only five shillings a week, but I many a time think that I am the happiest old felley out of heaven. Ah! I am happy, for sure! and the love of Jesus will make folk happy, and I am fair surprised that every body does not love Him."

"And how long is it since your wife died?"

"Well, sir, it is twenty years since she went to heaven; and I sometimes think that I am so long after her that she will think I have missed t'road. But I have not; no, no, I have not."

On parting with old John Stott, his simple, earnest prayer in my behalf affected me much. What a testimony! Only five

shillings per week, living in lodgings, ninety years of age, and in his own opinion "the happiest old felley out of heaven." Never yet were Satan's servants, old or young, able to say this! Sin has no such trophy. "Having nothing, and yet possessing all things," for all things are ours, if we are Christ's; and old John and old Matthew, while knowing something of poverty, possessed the true riches.

But there are greater troubles in this world than poverty. Trials more severe, and anguish of heart more bitter, has been the lot of many parents through the conduct of undutiful, rebellious children, bringing a sadness of soul, a sorrow of spirit, far more distressing than mere struggles for bread. Matthew had one son, whose conduct greatly embittered the old man's last days. This son was a drunkard, and through drink often got into disgrace. The old man could sometimes prevail on this child of his sorrows to accompany him to the Chapel; then hope would spring up concerning him.

But that hope was again and again dashed to the ground. When Matthew, in his prayers, mentioned this lad, his voice always trembled:—bad children have caused thousands of trembling prayers.

Matthew's chief earthly comfort was his Chapel for the Poor. As long as strength remained, he was found at the various means. Often might he be seen on the Sunday evening leading old blind John Hamer through the narrow streets. It was a beautiful sight! Two feeble, gray-headed, old men, bending under the weight of years, plodding their weary way to the house of prayer. To Matthew it was the house of God, the gate of heaven. But the blind man's guide was the first to fall, his white locks disappeared from our midst, and we all heard with sorrow that he was sick unto death.

To stand by the bed of the dying, to look on the sunken eye, the wasted form, and heaving breast has often been my lot. There great lessons are learned. As I gazed

on the closed eyes, moving lips, and changed features of my dear old friend, as he lay in his poor home, on his poor bed, I felt it was a great lesson indeed.

Bending over him, I said, "Matthew."

His whole body moved, his eyes opened, his features changed, he smiled and answered,—

"I know that voice; sure I do. What could I do now, Mr. Ashworth, without Christ? He is very near me, and very, very precious! I have been praying for my children, especially one—you know where he is. Poor lad! my prayers for thee are ended, but I hope to meet thee in heaven. I leave my wife and children in my heavenly Father's care, and die very happy."

Matthew had his failings, but he is gone where failings will never reach him more. In the world he had great tribulation; in Christ he had peace. Heaven now counts one more; while of the old stock, the Chapel for the Destitute counts one less.

On the
cashire fr
huge sand
tion, Robi
rocks, wit
an irregul
west side,
by broken
point bei
out into
valley ca
and Egyp
and wine,
smoking
Pompey's

OLD AB'.

ON the ridge of hills which divide Lancashire from Yorkshire there is a cluster of huge sandstone rocks, called, by local tradition, Robin Hood's Bed. Standing on these rocks, with the face towards the setting sun, an irregular dale stretches out on the north-west side, about ten miles in length, bounded by broken ravines and uplands, the highest point being Knoll Hill, the south opening out into an extensive level plain. This valley cannot, like those of Savoy, Italy, and Egypt, boast of producing corn, and oil, and wine, but it can show many stupendous smoking obelisks, that for height leave Pompey's pillar, and Cleopatra's needle im-

measurably behind. The tillers of the soil on these flats and slopes count not their acres by hundreds, yet their small patches of grazing land yield to the industrious husbandman a moderate competence. This depression among the hills, from its farms or factories, claims no special notice, but the historian will yet mark it out as a place of some celebrity. We think not of the vale of Avon or the plains of Troy without their immortal bards, and this valley, in coming years, will find its chief renown from being the home and birth-place of one of England's powerful tribunes.

Many years ago, but yet within the memory of persons still alive, an unpretending carriage, with a trusty driver and steady horse, not for the first time, entered this valley at the south-west end, and the sole occupant of the humble vehicle was a thin, but hale, old man. This grey-haired veteran, grown grey in his Master's service, came with a weighty message to the whole of the inhabitants of this valley. Electric tele-

graphs were then unknown, but at the sight of this aged ambassador, intelligence flew fast before him. The village blacksmith, the pedlar, the wayside stone breaker, shouted out, "Wesley is come;" the grocer, draper, and sadler, forgetting their customers, greeted each other with the shout, "Wesley is come." As he neared the town, many voices loudly proclaimed the welcome news, that Wesley was come. On went the driver, at a very safe speed, until he arrived at the "Old Clock Face," a small public-house, in a narrow part of the town, called Blackwater Street; but being the wakes, the stables at the Clock Face were all occupied, and John Wesley's horse had to be stalled in the bottom room of a tin-plate worker's shop, in White Bear Yard, belonging to James Hamilton.

One of the tin-plate workmen who, through a former visit of Wesley to Rochdale, had become a greatly changed man, was wonderfully proud to have Wesley's horse in the shop near his bench. He

patted his neck, stroked him down, and gave him plenty of corn and oat cake. A woman from the country came with a broken tin roller, used in the spinning of woollen, to be repaired, and told the man she would call again in an hour, and he must be sure to have it ready. She called, but the roller had not been touched. She was very wroth, and spoke in strong terms to the workman. His reply was,—

"Mistress, this is Mr. Wesley's horse, and I have to attend to him. I am so proud of seeing any thing belonging to a man that has been so great a blessing to me."

But this only increased the rage of the woman, who roared out,—

"Hang you and Wesley too, I wish he had the tin roller in his throat."

"Well, well," quietly replied the man, "Mr. Wesley is just now going to preach in the chapel at Toad Lane, at the end of High Street. If you will go and hear him, I will have your roller ready when you come back."

"I will go and look at the chap, but I shall not stop long to hear him talk; I have something else to do," was her answer.

Being a determined character, the woman pushed her way through the crowd, and got near the pulpit. She heard, and trembled, and wept, and, with many others, fell on her knees, crying, "What must I do to be saved?"

The amazing unction and influence attending the preaching of Whitfield and Wesley in churches, chapels, barns, streets, lanes, fields, or market-places, was marvellous. Scenes greatly resembling the day of Pentecost were often witnessed. After one open air service in Moorfields, Whitfield had one thousand persons giving in their names as anxious inquirers after salvation. When souls are saved it still is, and ever will be, by the descent of the Holy Ghost; and nothing but Christ exalted can bring the converting Spirit down,—"I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me,"—for ever settles the true work of the Christian min-

istry. Wesley and Whitfield knew and felt this. Baptized with the Holy Spirit themselves, they preached salvation by faith in Christ. Multitudes believed, and the woman that wished the tin roller in Wesley's throat was one, and the subject of this narrative was indirectly another.

In those days many of the inhabitants of this valley, as in most parts of England, were in great spiritual darkness. Places of worship were few and far between; books were rare things; Sunday or other schools, except in favoured places, did not exist; not one in fifty could read, and where the people assembled for worship, that they might be able to sing, the hymns were read out in two lines, and sometimes only in one. At one of these gatherings, two young married country women believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and were saved, and one of them was the wife of Abraham, better known as Ab', the subject of this narrative. With intense earnestness she told her husband, and besought him to seek for pardon and peace,

that they might rejoice together. He heard her with astonishment, and trembled from head to foot. A few days after, a minister came to preach in the neighbourhood, and she urged her husband to go, but could not prevail. Putting the child in the cradle, she requested him to rock while she went out. She ran to the service, but the thoughts of her child disturbed her, and before it was over she run back. Ere she got home, the baby had waked up, and began to cry as loud as a three months' old baby could cry. Her giant of a husband—a giant in bone and stature—lifted the little thing out of the cradle, and began to walk across the floor, quietly swinging it up and down, saying,—"Husht, chilt, husht; do husht; bless thee, chilt, do be quiet, for I cannot bide to yer thee cry. Husht, will ta? Bee bo! bee bo! When th. mother comes whoam, winnot I thrash her. Bee bo! bee bo! husht, chilt, do husht; tha makes me sweat." Just then the mother arrived, and taking hold of the child, said, "He, lad, I

wish tha had yeard yon mon preach; tha never yeard nought like it; no, never. I wish tha had goan!"

The way in which this was spoken softened down the ire of her tall husband, for his conscience had begun to trouble him. He knew his wife was daily praying for his salvation, and he had several times promised he would go to the chapel some time. One evening, without telling her of his purpose, he went to Union Street Chapel, in Rochdale. The place was crowded, but he got into one corner, with eyes and ears open, and he that night witnessed scenes and heard words that stirred his soul, and alarmed his guilty conscience. During the singing of one hymn he was wrought to such a pitch of agony that he called out "Murder! murder!" not knowing what he said. In this state of mind he set off towards home. It was a stormy, winter evening; the snow was piled up in large drifts, covering high thorn hedges, and in many places blocking up the road. He

cared little for the storm; on he went, until he began to ascend a by-lane behind Norden, then falling on his knees, with his face against a wall of snow, he began to cry for mercy. Long he knelt, and long he cried—cried until his hot breath melted a hole in the drifted snow. God heard that cry, saw his sorrow for sin, and spoke peace to his soul. Up he sprang, and lifting both hands, clapped them over his head, and shouted for joy; then rushed on through every obstacle. On arriving at home, he threw wide open the door, and again shouted,—"Lass, lass, aw'm saved! aw'm saved! God has saved my soul in a snaw-drift! Glory! glory!"

Did Abraham's after life confirm the rapturous declaration of that evening? Did it manifest to beholders that the change was genuine? Yes, it did. It was not the mere outburst of an excited imagination—a momentary flash of wildfire,—but the extacies of the new birth. He had heard men preach, who preached for souls, and the gospel of Christ was the power of God to

his salvation. Oaths and curses gave way to prayers and praises, and taproom brawls to chapel songs, and louder songs have hardly ever come from mortal throat.

But in all new converts, especially such ardent souls as Abraham's, the old and new man have often desperate battles. Old tempers and old habits fight hard to keep their place, or return after being driven out, and nothing but watching and prayer can defeat them. This neglected, the house is empty, the wicked spirit, bringing others more wicked, will come back, and the last end of that man will be worse that the first. Abraham had many of these conflicts between grace and sin. One of his besetments was hunting. At the cry of the hounds he would leave his work, and run half-naked up hill, down dale, shouting and howling louder than the bay of the dogs or the huntsman's horn, the boldest of all the four-legged or two-legged animals, yelling, panting, and blowing to catch the little, beautiful, timid, trembling hare, and called

ft "noble sport." The sport often ending amongst ale pots, rum casks, and in sore bones.

After his conversion, he one day heard the hounds. He tried hard to keep back, but tried in his own strength, which always fails. Away he went, over hedge and ditch, shouting as loud as ever. Several of the old hunters laughed heartily when they saw him. One of them called out, "Amen, Ab', amen!" Ab' was very dejected that evening when he returned home. He knew he had disgraced himself; he durst not look his wife in the face; he became so miserable, that he went down to Rochdale to ask the minister, Mr. Bogie, what he must do. The minister told him to pray for more strength, to resist all temptation to any sin, and God would help him. After that he halloed to the hounds no more.

To see a giant of a man married, and a father, who could not say his A, B, C, would seem strange to the children of our Sunday-schools now; but so it was with Abraham.

He got a little spelling-book, and went amongst his neighbours to get some one to teach him to read, but none of them could. There was only one Sunday-school in the neighbourhood, and it was three miles away.

This first Sunday-school was begun by James Hamilton, of Rochdale, in 1784, in the same room down the White Bear Yard, in which Mr. Wesley's horse was stabled, on the night before mentioned. Mr. Hamilton wrote to Robert Raikes for instruction about Sunday-schools. Mr. Raikes advised him to get the children together, and teach them to read and write, and, as often as possible, take them to some place of worship. Mr. Hamilton began the first Sunday with six scholars, and the second with thirteen. An acquaintance of his, John Croft, asked him why he took the children into his tin-shop on the Sabbath, and when informed that it was a Sunday-school, he requested permission to become a teacher. The ninth Sunday there were twenty-three scholars, and then, as recommended by Mr. Raikes,

they took them in procession to the parish church. When they got to the church door, the beadle, with his red collar and long black staff with silver knob, sternly refused them admittance. James Hamilton told him it was a Sunday-school, and they must be admitted. This enraged the mighty beadle, and he took out the hand-cuffs; at the sight of which John Croft took to his heels, down the one hundred and twenty-two steps, but Hamilton stood firm. The beadle then shut and locked the door, and ran to the Vicar, old Dr. Wray, to tell him that two men had brought a lot of dirty children, that they called a Sunday-school, and were determined to go into the church, and he was determined they should not. The Vicar, scratching his wig, said,—

"Put them in some corner, out of sight."

It would be a large corner that would hold that same school now, for it numbers twelve hundred, and many thousands more are taught in the valley, not only to read, but their way to a better world.

But if Abraham could not then read, he had the organs of both tune and sound, and could sing with uncommon power. I remember him when I was a boy in the school, —a school and place of worship built by several who, like Abraham, had received the gospel, all helping with hand and pocket,— he was then about fifty years of age, and sat in one corner of the singing-pew with his mouth and ears open to catch the words. He was not the leading singer, but he did lead with a vengeance. Clarionets and fiddles, bassoons and trumpets, all had to go at his speed, often to the mortification of the professionals. High above all instruments sounded his voice. He sang aloud for joy. Many said that Abraham's religion was all noise and sound, but I thought he had more religion than all the people in the chapel.

After his conversion, he joined the church at Bagslate, and in the week evenings met in class with Samuel Standing, of Tenter House, and several years after, the church

having greatly increased, he was requested to take charge of a class himself.

One reason why the Wesleyan Church in one single century has become so vast, both in numbers, power and influence, is, that all grades of talent are set to work. One talent, two, or five, all are employed according to their several abilities, either as preachers, leaders, or Sunday-school teachers. Zeal and knowledge have here a w de field; the calm, thoughtful logician; the cold, phlegmatic reasoner; the cautious, pathetic pleader; the burning, fiery orator; the shouting, stamping, Bible thumper; all have their mission, all have their followers and admirers; and thus all idiosyncracies are met, from the highest intellect to the lowest, and from this has grown up that gigantic section of the Christian church.

Abraham knew nothing of circumlocution; his sententious, terse, and pointed speeches in the love-feast and class, both before and after he became leader, were retailed throughout the neighbourhood, and are re-

membered by many to this day. He was always serious, and however others might laugh at his laconics, he himself was in sober earnest. Amongst many other rough, wicked, and daring characters that were gathered into the church from the hills and valleys of Norden, was his brother Joseph. Seeing him in one of their meetings, he shouted out,—

"Eh, Joe, lad, what a mercy it is that thee and me are here. Before God saved our souls, we were both wild as March hares, and ragged as filley foles. If the grace of God had not stopt us, we met o' bin in hell, brunnin' like two breek."

One evening, in his class, he said,—

"Friends, my soul is filled as full of love as a shoddy bag. As I coom oer't fields, aw shewted glory so lewd that sheep and kews all stared at me. I shewted lewder than when I went o' huntin', for I had far more need to shewt the praises of Jesus Christ than shewt after huntin' dogs."

A poor man in his class that had been

some time without work, and had several of his family sick, expressing his gladness that the Lord had promised to deliver in the day of trouble, Abraham replied,—

"If theaw had to tak thy troubles un poverty to some big mon, un ax him to help thee, theaw would have to go to th' back dor, un mind th' dog kennel; a sarvant would ax wot theaw wanted, then tell another sarvant, then th' butler, then th' maister; un he met be engaged, un thee toud to co' again some time else; but when theaw brings thy troubles to Jesus, theaw art not stopt we yard dors, dog kennels, sarvants, nor butlers, but theaw may go streight too Him, un He will mak thee welcome. Glory! glory! glory!"

One of his members, who was prospering in worldly things, spoke of the difficulty of keeping humble, Ab' replied,—

"I am the most humble, and think of God best, when me stomach's empty, un aw think sometime God lets it be empty to keep me reet, till I'm better rooted and grounded."

At one church meeting several thought that there were signs of a revival, and that prayer-meetings ought to be held. One speaker said it would only be a burning of candles to no use. Ab' said,—

"Candles against souls! candles against souls! that caps all. A soul saved is worth o' th' candles it' world. I'll find candles! I'll find candles!"

After Abraham joined the church, one weakness long troubled him: he was hot-tempered, soon provoked, and could say stinging words, and so grieved many. He had often to mourn and weep over this failing. He would sometimes confess his infirmity, and ask his friends to bear with him. Referring to his grievous fault in one meeting, he said,—

"Friends, I think my temper mends a bit. Th' donkey kicked milk cans off yesterday, un I did not fly in a passion; aw'v sin th' day when aw should o' kilt it on th' spot."

That he had much to try his temper must be admitted. His good little wife soon pre-

sented him with a pack of hungry children, —seventeen in all. Cotton weaving was then their principal support, for he was not then a farmer, and it was one continued struggle for very existence. The scanty, well-patched, but clean clothing of father, mother, and children, as they appeared in the chapel and school, told of thrift and poverty. What a mercy to those children that their parents were Christian; that they were led by them from their childhood to the Sunday-school and the house of God; led, not driven,—taken, not sent. Many parents drive and send their children to a place of worship, but go not themselves. Such parents need not be surprised if the child, in after-life, should copy the example, and reject the precept; and it is well for families attending the sanctuary, when the pew and fireside harmonize. When all the religion is in the church on Sunday, and none at home on Monday, it is a poor look out for the young ones, or the old ones either.

My long residence in the town has never lessened my love for the country; the restless toils of anxious businesss find a healthy antidote on the mount and in the wild wilderness,

> Where tiny streams sing their soft songs
> To shining pebbles.

To climb the smooth or rugged steep, that brings to view the outstretched landscape, where distance fades, and sky and mountain meet, gives to overwrought nerves, morbid feelings, or languid circulation, new life and active energies.

This love of rural walks and country scenes has often led me to our neighbouring hills and dales. In one of these walks I found myself climbing amongst the purple heath and sheep tracks of Rooley Moor and Hunger Hill. I cared little for food when I set out, but about two o'clock in the afternoon, while passing over the last-mentioned and right-named hill, I felt an intense desire for a good dinner. Seeing the roof of a

house below my feet, I descended, hoping to find it the home of some hospitable person. Passing through a stone stile, and entering the open farm yard, I was quite delighted to find it was Bank House, and the home of the now Old Ab'. The aged man sat on a saw-block, with an axe in his hand, chopping rotten branches into firewood, on the stump of a tree. He was without hat or coat, and his vest wide open. Accosting the old man, I said,—

"Could you furnish me with a little bread and butter-milk, sir, for I am very hungry?"

"Ah, we con. Yoar i'th reet shop, for win just churnt, un aw think there's bits o' butter in yet, un that will mend it." He then called aloud, "Ann, Ann, get this gentleman some milk and bread."

The day being fine, I sat down on a strong stone bench beneath the window, on one end of which stood two inverted large cans, used for carrying milk to the town. Ann, his aged partner, very soon brought me a nice round white loaf, a print of fresh made

butter, and a neat jug of rich mellow buttermilk, which made me think I was "i'th reet shop." Just then a large sheep dog came bounding from the barn, barking in rage and fury, his hair behind his neck standing straight up; but the old farmer shouted out,—

"Come ewt, dog; come ewt, will ta?"

I thought, now is my time for opening conversation, for I longed to begin with the old man, so I said,—

> "Let dogs delight to bark and bite,
> For God hath made them so."

The old man paused from breaking chips, and without lifting up his head observed,—

"Is not that election, sir; is not that election? But happen yo' don't care aught about it."

"It is one of Watts' songs for children, I replied. "Watts was a sweet singer for young or old."

"Which is the best poet—Watts or Wesley—do yo think? Some say one, un some

say another. Wot do yo say? Dun yo know Wesley once preached in this house, standin' i'th old oak staircase? But happen yo don't care about it?" Old Abraham again observed,

"Well, sir," I replied, "I think the Lord raised up and inspired both Wesley and Watts to write hymns for His children. Millions that are gone home to brighter climes, have sung them, and millions yet unborn shall sing them. Watts wrote more for meek, timid, doubting, but true Christians, who feel their weakness and unworthiness,—who fearing to say too much, often say to little. These sing from his hymns,

"When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I'll bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes."

The moment I finished this verse, Abraham started up from the saw-block, and called out,—

"Ann, Ann, do coom ewt, lass, un yer

this mon talk. My wife's a timid Christian, but, bless her, hoo's o good un."

Ann came to the door with tears in her eyes. She had heard all, for she was in the porch, looking on and hearkening, but he did not see her. Going on with my comparison, I observed,—

"Wesley wrote for bolder and more daring Christians,—men whose ardent souls were best stirred by strong, nervous language, such as,—

"My God, I am thine, what a comfort divine,
What a blessing to know that my Jesus is mine;
In the heavenly Lamb, thrice blessed I am,
And my heart it doth dance at the sound of His name."

Before quoting that verse, I had risen to my feet, to give it all the force I possibly could. The old man stretched himself, with the axe in one hand and the chip in the other, then raising them straight over his head, and looking up in the clear, blue sky, with all his might he shouted,—

"Glory! glory! glory! that's me, that's

me; my God, I am thine, for sure. Glory! glory! and our Ann's thine too; but hoo does not make as big a noise about it as I do."

While the old farmer was so lustily shouting, the sheep dog began scampering about the yard, yelling and barking, while Ann, the dear aged partner of his joys and sorrows, laughed through her tears.

Before leaving, and while I stood betwixt the two aged pilgrims, with our faces towards the valley that stretched out to Tandle hills and the Yorkshire boundaries, I gave out one of those hymns I knew they could both sing. Looking into the calm, serene heavens, we all sang together—

"There we shall see His face,
And never, never sin;
And from the rivers of His grace
Drink endless pleasures in;
Yea, and before we rise
To that immortal state,
The thoughts of such amazing bliss
Should constant joys create."

The old man stopped singing, and sobbed for joy; his dear old wife joined me in tremulous voice. To us all it was a moment of deep unspeakable bliss,—a bliss which none but Christians know.

As I passed out at the gate to resume my walk, they both watched me ascend the hill, and the last words I heard were,—

"God bless yo, us who yo are; you stirred up my old soul above a bit."

Abraham's religion was not all noise and sound. The blessing he found in the snow drift, fifty years before, safely guarded him through a long life, and now he, with his faithful Ann, are with the other Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the spirits of the just men made perfect, enjoying that amazing bliss of which we that day sang.

MILLY.

A MAN, who tormented himself and others with his bad temper, called at a barber's shop to be shaved. After the operation, he put down a penny as usual, and was going out, when the barber said,—

"Stop, stop, it is three halfpence this time."

"How so?" observed the new shaved man; "it was only a penny last week."

"So it was, but you are bad tempered to-day, and your face is much longer this week than last, and the job more difficult: three halfpence, if you please."

The barber might be only jesting with his surly customer, but there is no doubt that temper alters the shape of the countenance.

Of this there are many evidences, and Milly, our early acquaintance, was one.

Grievous offences against children may, in after life, be forgiven, but they are seldom forgotten. An aged neighbour of mine, a kind old woman, had on several occasions given me a little bread and butter. She was one day baking, and made me a little cake. I watched the oven with intense interest until my small muffin was ready. It seemed a long time, but at last the good-natured old creature pronounced it quite enough, and was putting it into my pinafore, when hearing feet descending the stairs, she cried out,—

"Run, child, run! Milly's coming, Milly's coming; run, run!"

There was not time for me to escape out of doors, so she opened the pantry door, bidding me be very quiet. I got into the furthest corner, amongst the coals, and sat silent and almost breathless with fear, my hot cake burning my fingers. But Milly had suspected something, and opening the pantry door, snatched the bread from my hands,

gave me a sound box on the ear, and pushed me out into the street, threatening vengeance if ever I came there again. There I stood, my ear singing and burning, robbed of my precious cake, and turned out of doors for no fault of my own. My opinion of Milly was formed that day, and years have not changed it. Nor was I alone in this respect, for all the children in the neighbourhood, from some cause, held her in the greatest dread, and those older in experience and knowledge avoided her company. She was feared and shunned by all, young and old.

Milly's infirmity was unmistakably seen in her face. It was not the miserable, haggard countenance of the drunkard's wife, nor the sad look of painful and sharp sorrow, but cold and cheerless, leaving disagreeable impressions, from which a child, a dog, or a stranger would turn away. Her temper had stamped itself on her features, as it does on all, but perhaps shows more in woman than man, especially since man began to wear beards. Had she cultivated a kind, sunny,

genial spirit, she might have been thought handsome; but her temper settled that question. A sweet disposition will make a plain woman beautiful, but a sour temper will spoil any face.

Milly's occupation, together with all that composed the household, consisted in spinning, winding, and weaving flannel pieces, all working together in a large upper room. The aged creature who made me the unfortunate cake was mother or grandmother to all, and it was painful to witness her constant anxiety to keep peace amongst them, and especially to please Milly, for she knew if Milly was kept right the others would not give her much trouble. She anticipated all her wants, was silent when sharp words were spoken, and would watch her countenance to see how matters stood, just as she would look at the clock to tell the time of day. When the cloud was on Milly's brow, which it often was, the timid mother would walk up and down the house restless, looking in every corner to see if ought was wrong.

Had she been sitting near the fire, she would have moved back to give her room; had she been reading, she would have laid down the book, and taken her knitting, fearing fault would be found with her for being idle. But there was the greatest difficulty to please Milly with her food; the potatoes were either over or under boiled; the meat either raw or burned; the tea too weak or too strong; the bread and butter too thick or too thin. Sometimes, when called to her meals, she would have looked on the table, and because the provisions did not suit her, without speaking a word, she would have turned round and gone back to her work, or sat down in the sulks. The poor mother would then be very miserable, fret, and be unable to take food herself, and say,—

"What is the matter, Milly? Tell me; I have done my best."

But Milly would not condescend to answer, but sulk on, never speaking to any of them the remainder of the day, or perhaps for several days.

Sulking at her dinner on one occasion, her niece, a strong, healthy young woman, observed,—

"Well, it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good; we shall have so much more."

But she was instantly caught by the hair of the head, and instead of joining at sulking Milly's share, Milly gave her tears for her own dinner; and that day, as on many former occasions, there was sulking, anger, and sorrow in the whole house; peace and harmony entirely destroyed, all through the temper of Milly

But Milly's mother always suffered the most from these outbursts of her daughter's temper; the poor old creature would tremble and weep for hours. It is sad when children by their conduct to parents increase the sorrows inseparable from the infirmities of old age, for the venerable in years to say, as I have heard one say,—

"I have lived too long, and I am in the way now. There was a time when I could have borne sharp words and angry looks

better than I can now; I was not then dependent on others, I could earn my own bread, and fight my own battles in life; now I cannot, and I bitterly feel it. But I shall not trouble them long, they are fast shortening my days, and I would advise people never to pray to be old; let the Lord take them when He will, if through Christ they are ready, for it is better to be in heaven than grieved at the fireside of others when our limbs are feeble, and we cannot help ourselves."

These painful words were spoken by an aged parent suffering from the hot temper and cruel words of a child.

How many homes have being deprived of their sunshine by the black cloud of one bad temper; how many families made miserable by the culpable selfishness, the morose, moody, sullen disposition of a Milly; how many happy social circles have been broken up, and how many joyous, pleasant parties turned into grief by one Milly? They change cheerfulness into sadness, sweet into

bitter, honey into gall; being wretched themselves, they cannot bear to see others happy. Miserable in their own souls, they take a fiendish delight in making others miserable; and perhaps nothing rouses their bitter malignity, their intense hatred so much, as caring nothing about, or trying to be cheerful in spite of them. This is always an unpardonable offence. But to be absolutely indifferent to the conduct of others, especially of those with whom we live, is impossible. The genial soul and smiling face *will* warm our hearts, the surly look and frozen soul *will* chill them; we cannot help it, do what we will. Of this the following fact is an instance:—

A shoemaker who had married a wife with a little of the Milly temper in her, was rather surprised to find that she could sulk. He was a steady, industrious, careful man himself, and was determined he would not allow his wife's temper to affect his own. He tried to whistle and sing as usual, but found he could not; he tried to laugh her

out of her sulks, but it only made matters worse; he felt vexed and uneasy in spite of himself. Having scratched his head, and pondered over the matter, he thought he would sulk too, but he was not bad enough for that,—it would not suit his sunny soul. Hitting on what he thought would stop this sulking, he said, in a whisper, to Fred, a young lad he had as an apprentice,—

"Fred, go into every one of the thirteen cottages in this row, and tell all the women to come as quick as possible; mistress has been struck dumb. Quick, Fred, quick!"

Fred thought it was true, for he had not heard the mistress speak for three days; so he ran into every house, saying,—

"Come, come, mistress has lost her speech, and master wants you to come and see her. Do come."

The sulky, ill-tempered wife, unconscious of what was going on, sat sewing at the fire-side, and very soon seven of the neighbours all stood around her, with faces expressing

their sympathy with the speechless woman. One of them said,—

"What a pity! what a pity! How did it come on?"

The shoemaker's wife was astonished, and in her astonishment rose up, and looking at the crowd of women, exclaimed,—

"Whatever is there to do?"

The merry cobbler was peeping out of his small workshop, to see how matters went, and the moment he heard his wife speak, said to the now confused group,—

"I am very much obliged to you; she can speak now; and if she becomes dumb again, I will let you know."

I am not sure the cobbler took the wisest course in this matter, nor do I recommend it. By a practical joke he had made his sullen wife speak, but it was at the expense of exposing her temper to the whole neighbourhood, and thus lowering her in her own self-respect and the respect of others, and this seldom results in real good. I would advise all people that sulk, to give notice

that they are going to sulk, and how long, and why. This they ought to do, and this might have saved both the cobbler and his wife from the ludicrous dilemma.

Milly had one or two redeeming features in her character. She was clean, industrious, and honest, and also attended church. But these good qualities were sadly clouded by her temper; and when Mr. Foster, the minister of St. Stephen's Church, at the request of Milly, consented to preach in her house, all the neighbours were surprised; they could not understand how bad temper and religion could go together. Some thought of writing to Mr. Foster to tell him what sort of a person Milly was; but if they did, the minister perhaps thought that good might be done both to her and others, for he came several times. I do not think she was considered a member. Any Church would be disgraced by having a bad-tempered member, as such a Church would be denuded of what gives lustre to Christian life,—love, joy, peace, gentleness, meekness. A surly,

moody, sullen temper is the very opposite of that Christianity taught by the meek and lowly Jesus. This the world knows, and bad-tempered professors of religion little know the harm they do. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."

I know there is an old saying, but a very foolish one, that "what is bred in the bone cannot come out of the flesh." That temper, like other developments of our depravity, may be transmitted, or rather produced by example, admits of no doubt. Bad-tempered parents have often bad-tempered children: they copy what they see. But it is a mere excuse for any man or woman to say or believe that they cannot subdue the worst temper, and bring it under entire subjection. They may, and they ought, and they would, if they strongly wished it. But it is a burning shame and a disgrace for persons professing Christianity to give heed for a moment to the thought that the grace of

God cannot root out the worst temper ever Satan made. All admit that the new birth, of which Christ spoke to Nicodemus, is an entire spiritual change,—old things passed away, and all things became new; but pray what is changed if the bad temper is the same? It may, and does in some, fight hard, but it is weak as a feather if we only accept offered grace.

I remember being in a neighbour's house, when a messenger came from the office, in great haste, to say he was wanted immediately. Off went his slippers, and he called out, "My shoes, my shoes;" but his shoes were very dirty; the servant had neglected to clean them, but quickly began to brush and get them ready. The master turned his back to the fire, standing in his stocking feet, and began to whistle a favourite tune. The moment the shoes were finished, he slipped them on, and away he went. Seeing him again on the evening of the same day, I said,—

"When you began whistling this morning,

while your shoes were being brushed, was it the safety-valve?"

"Yes, I intended it for one," he laughingly replied.

"How long have you had that safety-valve, may I ask?"

"Well, sir, after my conversion, I found a bad temper to be my besetting sin, and I made a vow that for six months I would devote ten minutes every day to think and pray over my infirmity, asking for strength to conquer, and by grace I obtained a complete victory; and so may any one who seeks divine help. I have to watch over it yet, and I ought to watch over it, or any other besetment."

If I were to give the name of this man, thousands would know him, and hundreds testify to his amiable and gentle temper. His presence in any company is

"A charm to banish grief away,
To snatch the cloud from care;
Turn tears to smiles, make dulness gay,
Spread gladness everywhere."

And that ought to be said of every one professing to be religious. Lovely tempers are the flowers and fruit of grace.

Milly, like all persons of her disposition, was a self-tormentor, and also a tormentor of others. She was on bad terms with herself and her neighbours. The niece, whose hair she pulled on the day the dinner was wrong, was visited by a young man, who was anxious to make her his wife. Knowing Milly well, he kept out of her way as much as possible, fearing to bring either himself or his intended in collision with her. But one evening, as he stood near the door, she very abruptly ordered him away; he was much grieved at her insolent conduct, and did not move off as quick as she expected; she snatched up the tongs, and struck him behind the head with such force that a little more would have killed him. He bled profusely. His parents, sisters, and brothers, who lived close by, hearing that he was much hurt, ran in great haste to see what was the matter. When they learned how

and why he was wounded, their wrath and indignation was poured on the head of Milly, all the inhabitants of the village taking their part. Some cried out, "take her to the pump, take her to the pump;" others, "bring her out, and we will stretch her curls;" and had it not been for her quiet sister, who begged of them not to hurt her, she would have reaped on the spot what she had sown. Milly trembled with fear that night, and for several days durst not leave the house. She saw she had made a mistake, her temper had nearly brought her before a jury, the whole village cried shame on her, and her relatives were grieved and humbled. People advised the niece to be married at once, and not live another month with such a pest as her aunt. The preaching in the house was given up; friends who had tried to defend and screen her could do so no longer; no one wished her company, and very few saluted her with a good morning.

She frowned on others, others frowned on her;
She was not friendly, therefore had no friends.

Let all sour-tempered people know that this must and will be the result of their morose souls,—they will be shunned and avoided, as a natural and very proper consequence.

There was a dressmaker in the neighbourhood that held out in favour of Milly, when almost every one else had given her up. This dressmaker was a kind, patient person, and never would have a disrespectful word spoken of an absent person without trying to say what could be said in her favour. She thought some excuse might be made for Milly, because she was so like her father,—that having been trained wrong all the blame ought not to rest on her. Milly took a gown to be made to this person, and seemed very cheerful and agreeable. Exact orders were given, and exactly carried out, for the dressmaker was determined to convince the neighbours that she could keep on right terms with the surly one; but the gown had to be altered, and again altered, and because she refused to alter it a third time she got a

few stinging words from Milly's hot tongue, and a rather pompous threat that she need never expect another stitch from her,—a promise for which the dressmaker sincerely thanked her. Though defeated in her good intentions to keep on friendly terms with her bad-tempered neighbour, she would not speak a word against her. When her name was mentioned, she would laugh and shake her head, nothing more.

Milly, as might be expected, was considerably advanced in life before she was married. No young man, that valued his peace of mind, would for a moment think of being tied to such a vixen. No doubt many, like the cobbler, are taken in a little, and have to do as well as they can. The fat, easy, sleepy, come-day go-day man, that took Milly to be his wife, was the object of general sympathy. An old acquaintance meeting him remarked,—

"Why, I understand you are going to be married; is it true?

"Yes, I suppose it is," was the answer.

"Well, I do not like to say anything, but you may make up your mind that you will never be able to sit on the right side of the hearth-stone, or have sweet words to mend hard times."

This opinion, from one who knew Milly well, did not prevent the wedding, and when he finally took her out of the neighbourhood, an old man declared he was a public benefactor, for he had delivered them from a firebrand. Little was heard of her after, for her new home was a single house at a considerable distance from any other,—just such a place as all Millys should reside in, in mercy to others.

The old man was right when he called Milly a firebrand, and this will be true of most if not all bad-tempered people; for, as the Bible says, "death and life are in the power of the tongue, and he that hath a tongue falleth into mischief." Perhaps nothing gives us a better conception of the torment of infernal spirits, than a morose, gloomy, malignant temper. It is like the

perpetual sting of the scorpion,—in bitter spite stinging others, and in madness stinging itself. It is an evidence of deep depravity of heart, of a wretched, unsubdued, guilty soul. "The poison of asps is under the tongue," and the venom that destroys all peace is in the heart.

If a bad-tempered person does good at all, it is but negative. We are sometimes so disgusted and mortified with their conduct, that we determine never to degrade ourselves by such exhibitions of weakness, or rather wickedness; knowing that is a deadly foe to our peace, the very opposite of Christianity, and a grievous sin against God and man, we feel we must be on our guard, and watch and pray to avoid such a disgrace. There is no excuse for bad tempers, no more than there is for swearing, lying, or stealing. We all, like the man that stood whistling in his stocking feet, may have a safety-valve. Provided we follow his example, we may possess those sweet tempers that are the sunshine of life, the milk and honey of the

soul, springing from love, and begetting love, and turning winter's gloom into perennial spring.

It is now many years since Milly boxed my ears, and robbed me of my precious little cake, but she is still remembered, for she became a sort of standard of temper. If any one sulked, it would be said,—

"What, another Milly!"

If they set mischief among their relations and neighbours, it was observed,—

"Why, she is as bad as Milly."

If a person had a rasping tongue and a fiery temper, some one was sure to say,—

"She is Milly number two; or, she is a regular Milly."

This sketch of Milly is not overdrawn. She is only one of many hundreds, and my object is to hold up the mirror to old and young, showing how grievous, odious, and sinful bad tempers are, and by so doing induce others to determine that, by divine help, they will never be like MILLY.

EVERY
and almo
characters
all the re
arity of b
power or
to scores,
fluence t
ciety exe
often m
dwelling
some de
own pec
foolish o
to my l
these re

HAPPY NED.

EVERY nation, every considerable town, and almost every village has one or more characters standing prominently out from all the rest, distinguished by some peculiarity of body or mind, by some remarkable power or quality, making itself seen or felt to scores, hundreds, or thousands. The influence these conspicuous members of society exercise over the minds of others is often marvellous; their image or actions dwelling in the memory of the many in some degree mould their thoughts to their own peculiar pattern, whether high or low, foolish or wise, good or evil. It has fallen to my lot to come in contact with many of these remarkable men in every stage and

condition of life, and amongst them Edward Sunners, or Happy Ned, occupies no mean place.

My first interview with Ned was at Liverpool; he then gave me a shake of the hand which I did not soon forget; that firm grasp told of a big warm heart and unmistakable muscular power; about the middle height, sharp eye, bald head, clean shaved, rather stout. His strong bones, broad shoulders, full chest, firm step, and vigour of mind marked him out as a champion, for either right or wrong. In his younger days, when striking at the blacksmith's forge, with his rolled-up shirt-sleeves, his brawny arms, and his big red face, smeared with soot and sweat, no one would have taken him for an angel, and he would have been a bold or foolish man that dared to pull Ned's ears. But very frequently his sleeves were so tattered and torn that there was not much left to roll up, and his face was often black from other causes than smoke from the smith's fire. He was one of those deeply

degraded and miserably low characters called pugilists, ready to fight any man his own weight, either Sunday or week days; and sometimes his bruised and battered features told that he had found clenched fists as strong as his own. So reckless was his conduct that when his mother was dying he left her bedside to go and fight a pitched battle, and, strange to say, when he entered the ring stripped and ready for the brutal and savage encounter, a young woman, one of the spectators of the fight, fell in love with Ned, and when the battle was over "popped the question;" marriage soon followed, and the equally yoked couple went to live in lodgings, with just one halfpenny to begin the world with.

Many of Ned's battles were fought on the Sunday, in Parliament Fields, at one time the general place of resort for the roughs of Liverpool. After a victory, he would tie ribbons round his hat, and march in triumph with his torn clothes, bloody face, and short pipe in his mouth, his wife by his side, and

a bull-dog at his heels. One of these battles was with a man who was afterwards hung.

Ned was a child left to himself, and allowed by his parents to roam the streets or lanes at will, without any restraint. At twenty-two years of age he had never been in a place of worship, never in a Sunday or day school, never once on his knees in prayer, or ever taught to pray. He could not read or write one letter; he knew neither law nor gospel; he was a heathen in England, and an English heathen, and too many such are found amongst us

In the room at Fawcett's foundry, where Ned worked, there were several men of a very different character. There were religious men, and men who came to their work on a Monday morning clean, cheerful, and merry, instead of with parched throats, blood-shot eyes, ragged clothes, and sullen looks, like Ned and many others in the same workshop. The part of the room where these good men worked was called, in derision, the Amen Corner, and Cuckoo Nest.

One Monday morning, Ned heard these men telling what a glorious Sabbath-day they had enjoyed at Stanhope-street Chapel, and one of them seeing poor Ned trying to cram the torn sleeve of his dirty shirt out of sight, spoke kindly to him, and entreated him to go with them to the chapel the following Sunday. With much persuasion he consented, but as Sunday drew near, he wanted to run off his bargain, but to this they would not consent. Sunday came, Ned was called for, and went, for the first time, into a place of worship.

Had he been a wild man from the back woods of America, or a dark negro from Central Africa, he could not have been more bewildered and astonished. To see a multitude of well dressed people, all rising together to sing God's praises, mingling their voices in hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs, and then bow in solemn prayer to the great Jehovah, was a sight so new to Ned, that he seemed confounded and afraid. The whole service told powerfully on his

ignorant but opening mind. The good men who had taken him to church saw the effects with joy, and earnestly requested him to attend again. On the Tuesday evening following, one of them persuaded Ned to go with him to the class-meeting, and here he was greatly surprised to hear a smaller company of Christians singing, praying, and talking about the love of God and heavenly things, and making what he called "little short speeches." It was at one of these meetings that Ned felt the full weight of his guilt; and the sins of his past life, especially his secret sins, in all their horror crowded round him. The very heavens seemed black over his head, the earth ready to open and swallow him up. He cried mightily to God for mercy. So ignorant was he that he thought if he could make a little short speech at the week-night meeting like the others, he should be happy as they were. He got one ready, but when the evening came he had forgot it altogether; but that night was to Ned the night of

nights,—his cries for mercy were heard. God heard those cries, and pardoned him all his sins. So great was his rapture that, with a thundering voice, he shouted out with all his might,—

"My happy soul is free,
For the Lord has pardoned me.
Hallelujah to God and the Lamb."

A person in the meeting was greatly offended at the noise Ned made, and asked him if he was sincere, or if it was only sound? In his simplicity he thought she perhaps knew better than him, and that it might not be a real conversion, and for three days after he was more miserable than ever, but in his prayer to be truly saved, his joy again rushed back into his soul, and he again shouted loud as ever,—

"Hallelujah to God and the Lamb!"

The woman that called Ned a sham afterward saw her mistake, and very much regretted the expression.

There is no doubt that the silent, orderly, sedate persons in some of our churches, have their nerves terribly wrenched by the vociferous demonstrations of the more impulsive portion, and the impulsive are sometimes at a loss to understand the religion of the quiet and passive. It is well for both to have charity, for such contrasts ever were and ever will be. The sweet sound of the Æolian harp, touched by the soft breath of the gentle breeze, gives the deepest rapture to some souls, while others require the rougher and louder sounds of the trumpet's blast; but when heaven tunes the instruments, the harp and the trumpet will both answer their purpose,—one for the social means, the drawing-room, and the vestry, and the other for mountain tops, highways, and hedges.

Ned's conversion amazed everybody who knew him. Had the steam boiler at Fawcett's foundry blown up, or the tall chimney been blown down, surprise could not have been much greater. Challenge him to fight

said one, and see where his religion will be in five minutes. Saturday night will try him hard, said another; he will find his thirst for rum and ale too strong for him. Others mockingly said he begins to look very pale, singing and praying does not suit his constitution. Ned heard all, and God gave him grace to stand it all. Being a man of great energy, he took the best course for not only retaining his piety, but increasing it. Working for God keeps us near to God. He began to learn to read, write, attend prayer-meetings, cottage services, and open-air preaching; he also learned many soul-stirring hymns. These he sang at the meetings with wonderful effect. He now became as bold a champion for his Redeemer as he before had been for Satan. He told his old companions what the Lord had done for him, and affectionately urged them to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and he would pardon them every one, and everybody in Liverpool, and make them all like him, happy, night and day. It was this constant

speaking of his happiness, his cheerful smiling face, and his hearty greeting of everybody, that got him the name of happy Ned.

Ned before and Ned after his conversion were astonishingly different characters. The bleared eye, bruised face, parched lips, dirty rags and tatters, gave place to cheerful smiles, a clean appearance, and a respectable attire: the dark, sullen, miserable soul, to joy, peace, gentleness, meekness. He had proved the Bible true where it says, "There is no peace to the wicked," and he had also proved it true where Christ says, "My peace I give unto you." And no man ever did or ever will find true peace out of Christ.

About five years after Ned's conversion, from some cause or other, all the hands in Fawcett's foundry turned out. This, as all turnouts do, produced much suffering. Many of the hands had to seek employment in other places. A situation in the post-office was offered Ned, but he refused,

because they worked on the Sunday; for he said,—

"Neither kings nor governments shall rob me of my blessed Sunday. Never! never!"

He then applied at the custom house, for a place vacant there. An official rather pompously enquired,

"What is your profession, my man?"

Ned thought he was asking after his creed, or to what church he belonged, and caring little about creeds, he replied,—

"I am a soldier in the army of the King of kings, sir; bless the Lord!"

"Begone, my man, begone," was the sharp rejoinder. It was evident they misunderstood each other.

Several religious gentlemen, who had seen how well Ned was adapted for doing good amongst the most ignorant and degraded part of the community, urged him to devote all his time to that work; and now commenced his life as a town missionary.

Let it not be thought that Ned, in his new sphere of labour, was going to live the

life of a gentleman. The missionary who conscientiously attends to his work has more to depress his heart and disturb his mind than falls to the lot of most people. His love for dying souls—his deep desire to lead perishing sinners to Christ—absorbs every other feeling. He enters the dwellings of guilt and misery, dens of sin and sorrow, and rooms infected with pestilence; the sick and the dying are constantly before his eyes. He sees distress he cannot relieve, suffering he cannot alleviate, and pain he cannot assuage. Crowded gin shops and beer houses—licensed iniquity—counteract all his labours, and the ragged, miserable wives and children of the drunkard call for his daily sympathy. Hopeful cases of a change for the better often relapse in deeper degradation. Iniquity and every abomination meets him at every corner, night and day; and he sees more of human depravity in one week, than thousands of the easy and wealthy do in a whole lifetime. His motives are often questioned, and his best inten-

tions misconstrued; and nothing but a feeling of duty, a burning desire to do good, and the love of God in his heart could possibly sustain him in his work. The town missionary indeed sows in tears, but he knows that if he be the instrument in God's hands of saving only one soul, that one soul is more valuable than the whole world, and will be the crown of his rejoicing in the kingdom of heaven.

Ned commenced his missionary labours amongst the scavengers, night men, chimney sweepers, boxers, dog fighters, and the lowest of all the low characters in the town. He rose early in the morning, being seldom in bed after five o'clock, and spent many of the first hours in prayer, that God would help him that day in the work he had to do, and make him the instrument of good to those that never heard the gospel. This morning preparation gave him love and boldness. He had great tact, and his frank, cheerful, straight-forward way of speaking to the people soon made him a favourite

with most of them. His labours were not confined to any particular district or locality, —he went about doing good everywhere. In order to have greater power over the drunkard, he became a total abstainer himself, for he very properly said,—

"If I take drink myself, however little, my mouth is shut, and I have less power with the drunkard."

It required strong resolution to give up his tobacco, for he delighted in his pipe, but he was determined to do it. At last he said,—

"I dropped smoking altogether for many reasons. One was because so many lads smoked, and because it had such a blackguard look with it.

Kind and patient as he was with all the roughs that he laboured amongst, he did not escape misrepresentation, and sometimes actual violence. The gentlemen under whose superintendence Ned was labouring were determined to make an example of one wicked person that had assaulted Ned, and

summoned him before the magistrates to answer for his conduct. When the case was called, the missionary and the assailant both stood up before the bench.

"What is your charge against this man, Mr. Sunners?" inquired the Justice of the Peace.

"No charge, your worship, no charge. God bless him!"

Of course the assaulter was dismissed, to his utter astonishment, but he afterwards became a great friend to Ned, and stood his part in a subsequent insult. He gained the man by returning good for evil.

Ned had many indications that his labours amongst the people were not in vain. One Saturday evening, when about one hundred and fifty persons were assembled at a church meeting, several of them spoke of their joy and peace through believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. One man, a carter, with his clean, white smock, stood up, but his emotion for a time choked his utterance. When able to speak, he said,—

"I have much reason, my friends, to bless God for what He has done for me. I have been a wicked drunkard. I sold all the goods in the house for drink, and drove my poor old mother to the workhouse, having robbed her of everything. One day, miserable and burning with thirst, I stood at the passage leading to the house where I lodged, looking out for some one to lend me a penny, or pay for a pint of beer. Happy Ned came past, and putting his hand on my shoulder, spoke to me the first words of sympathy that I ever remember. He asked me to go with him to a cottage prayer meeting, and he would call for me. He called, and I went with him. At that meeting, which Ned conducted, my sins against God, and my drunken, wicked conduct to my mother, crushed me down to the earth. I wept and cried aloud for pardon and mercy. Soon after, God heard my cry, and saved me. I gave up drinking, attended chapel, worked hard, and took a small house and furnished it, and then fetched my mother back from

the workhouse, and my two young brothers from begging in the streets; and now we are all comfortable together, and Happy Ned is the instrument of it all."

Many who have had wretched homes in the low parts of Liverpool could, like the carter, tell what a blessing Ned had been to them.

In most of our large towns there is a class of useful men that have been too little cared for. They are blown in the wind, battered in the rain, are exposed to all weathers, and worked seven days to the week. They are required to be respectful and civil to everybody, however provoked, and if the biting frost and scorching sun gives them blooming noses, their character is discounted, for it is charged to John Barleycorn. They hold a responsible position, and, as a rule, are honest, respectable, and intelligent. Ned was often amongst these men, and it was thought advisable by the Liverpool Town Mission Committee, under whom he had laboured from the first, that he should devote the

most of his time and labours for their special good, and from that time he was called the Cabmen's Missionary.

The cabmen held, and still hold, the man who was doing all he could for their welfare, body and soul, in high esteem, and address him not as Ned, but Mr. Sunners. Fourteen hundred cabmen in Liverpool and neighbourhood meet their Missionary with a smile; and woe be to that man that, in their presence, should dare to insult their kind friend. From the commencement of his labours, he has stood beside two thousand three hundred death-beds, and three hundred of these have been cabmen, some of whom are now in heaven. One of them, in his last moments, sent for his brother. On his arrival, he requested that his head might be raised a little; he then beckoned his brother to come near him. Taking hold of his hands, with a low, feeble voice he said,—

"Dear brother, you see I am near the end of this life, but I am not afraid to die. My Saviour conquered death for me, and par-

doned my sins, before I was laid on this sick bed, or I cannot tell what I must have done, for I have now enough to do to fight with pain of body and shortness of breath. It was dear Mr. Sunners, or, as he is truly called, Happy Ned, that led me to Jesus. Blessed man! blessed man! And now, dear brother, I want you to come to the same dear Jesus, He will save you! He will save you! I do want to meet you in heaven! Do come to Jesus! do come! Promise you will meet me in heaven!"

The deeply affected young man promised his dying brother that he would try to meet him in the skies. The soul of the cabman passed away to glory, leaving a smile on his pale face of death.

In my last conversation with Mr. Sunners, I asked him why he was called Happy Ned? He replied,—

"Because I am always happy, alway empty, always full, always longing, always filling, always happy: bless the Lord!"

Thousands in Liverpool have seen the

happy man walking the streets, and giving tracts, for he has given myriads of the silent messengers away; and thousands have seen him, winter and summer, standing near the large gas lamp, or in open places, singing Zion's songs, giving short, pointed addresses, or offering up prayers. Always in earnest, and always persuasive and respectful. The witty and self-conceited have often tried to entangle him, but his invariable reply is,—

"I never argue except against sin and the devil, that is all. No, no; never argue. If I won, I should be proud; if you won, you would be proud. Religion is never proud. Come to Jesus, brother; get your soul saved, that's the best argument."

One scoffer tauntingly said to him before a large gathering of people whom the Missionary was addressing,—"Ned, you have made a good thing of your religion, old chap."

Ned replied,—"Yes, lad, that is true. It brought me out of a lodging house into a back cellar; out of the back cellar into a

back house; out of a back house into the front: cured me of broken flesh, black eyes, sore bones, cracked lips, and a parched throat; stripped me of dirty rags, and clothed me like a gentleman; put a watch in my fob, and a bob in my pocket; made me love everybody; and the best of all, made my soul very happy here, and promises me heaven, there to dwell with Christ for ever. Glory, glory, glory! And what it has done for me, it can do for you all. Glory, glory! Praise the Lord!"

An intellectual sceptic, who had often tried his controversial powers with ministers and professors of religion, was passing by when Ned gave the above answer. On asking who the man was, and seeing him so evidently happy, he afterwards remarked, that "it did more towards his conversion to Christianity than all the arguments he had ever held." How true the words,—

"Know,
Without star or angel for their guide,
Who worship God shall find Him. Humble love,

And not proud reason, keeps the door of heaven,
Love finds admission, where proud science fails."

It is now seventeen years since Sunners began his mission amongst the cabmen, and many of them will bless God in time and eternity that ever they knew him. There are converted men amongst them, and all are more thoughtful about divine things. They all sigh for the Sabbath—to use Sunners' own words, "they literally groan for it,"—and professors of religion are the greatest hindrance to their obtaining it.

If church and chapel goers thought more about the fourth commandment, or cared as much for the souls of cabmen as their Missionary does, Sunday cab hire would be almost unknown, and those worthy men enjoy the blessings of the Sabbath day.

It is just approaching forty years since saving grace made Edward Sunners happy. For thirty-four years he has been an abstainer from all intoxicating drink; he is highly esteemed by ministers of all denomi-

nations, well received in all circles, respected by all, rich and poor. A short time since, a man of wealth and influence meeting him said,—

"Good morning, Mr. Sunners; how are you getting on now?"

Sunners replied, "I have just been singing, sir,

'My God, I am thine, what a comfort divine,
What a blessing to know that my Jesus is mine;
In the heavenly Lamb thrice blessed I am,
And my heart it does dance at the sound of his name.'

That is what I have been singing. Glory, glory! I wish every rich man in Liverpool was as happy as I am."

Well may such a man be called HAPPY NED.